

# Leo Strauss

## Xenophon (1969-70)

**A course offered at St. John's College, Annapolis, 1969-70**

**Edited by David Bolotin and Christopher Bruell, with an introduction by Christopher Nadon**

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[There is no surviving audio file of session 1]

## Session 2

**Leo Strauss:** To begin my exposition with the discussion of why we must be interested in Socrates and therefore also in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*—why we must be interested in Socrates. I think a very up-to-date proof was given in a cartoon in the New Yorker, which I gather most of you did see: Socrates as *the* empty shouter. Now today I would like to proceed in a somewhat different manner, to approach the *Oeconomicus* in a somewhat different manner. Now the book transmits the art of household management, the *oikonomike*. Now this *oikonomike* is akin to what is now called economics, but is also different from it. The kinship is indicated to some extent by the term economics. Now what does economics mean? It has of course nothing to do with the management of the household, except if you add the qualifier “home economics,” and even then it is not quite. But it means primarily, as it was formerly called, “political economy.” Originally, it was even called “political arithmetic.” A man, Sir William Petty, and one generation younger than Hobbes, and an acquaintance, coined that term. And we can perhaps indicate what the spirit of this [admirable?]<sup>i</sup> pursuit was by the following fact. Petty tried to find out what later came to be called the “wealth of nations.” Now, human beings are not a negligible part of that wealth, and therefore he figured out the value of a human being, and he found this out by asking the question: How much does a man fetch in the slave market in Algiers?, to which another economist replied that the value which Sir William Petty had established was perhaps the value of an Englishman in other countries. A human being was worth much less, and in some countries the value went down to zero, and in some other countries to less than zero.

Now this is perhaps of some provisional value in understanding the difference between Xenophon and political economy. The wealth of nations, that <sup>1</sup>theme was not unknown to Xenophon and the ancients. Xenophon wrote a treatise on revenue and the revenue of Athens, the wealth of a city, by which he wanted to show how the Athenians were no longer compelled to behave rather unjustly to other cities. By increasing their revenue, the temptation to injustice would be decreased. And generally speaking, revenue and expenditure of the city was of course an important theme for a statesman, recognized as such by Xenophon, Aristotle, and so on. But this was not called and understood as “economic.” The term “*oikonomia*” was applied in a larger and metaphorical sense to the administration, *oikonomia*, of the universe by the gods. It was also applied later to something so different from economics as the economy of the truth. Thrift, thrifty tree of the truth.

Now . . . economics in the ancient, classical sense is the art of managing well the household. What Aristotle says on this subject, in the first book of the *Politics* is more comprehensive than what Xenophon says, and therefore, I think I should remind you briefly. According to Xenophon, the management of the household consists first of the management of human beings—the wife, the children, and the slaves—and the management of non-human beings: animals, lands, and tools. The latter are not understood as means of production because the emphasis is entirely on

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<sup>i</sup> Word in brackets inserted by transcriber.

the use rather than on production, for Xenophon and others. On the basis of Aristotle, it became a prominent tradition to say that there is a pursuit called political philosophy or political science which consists of three parts: ethics, economics, and politics.

Let us contrast with that traditional notion the notion now prevailing. In the first phase, political philosophy is now distinguished from political science, and political science in its turn is distinguished from economics, sociology, and so on. At any rate, economics is now one of the *many* social sciences which are fundamentally of equal rank, and of course there is no place for ethics in any serious sense of the word in this scheme. People speak all the time of values, but what they mean by it is not easy to follow. Now, what has taken place in the last centuries, beginning with such men like Sir William Petty,<sup>ii</sup> was a profound transformation of an approach which made possible *oikonomike* in the original sense. We must know the original form in order to grasp our hidden presuppositions, because the transformation and that which was transformed, these precisely are the things which we presuppose without necessarily being aware. Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* is the earliest work on “quote economics end quote” which has come down to us. But we shall not read it as such. But we shall read it, as I explained last time, as *the* Socratic discourse of Xenophon.

Now <sup>2</sup>we began to read the first chapter, and we observed there three points which I would like to recapitulate. First, a point made by Socrates: managing the household does not necessary mean managing one's own household. The man who possesses that art can manage anybody's household. A man may have no household of his own and yet be skilled in managing other people's households. This divorce from what is one's own was the work of Socrates. The second point, which was due to Critobulus, is that economics is not understood as managing the household but increasing it—a very grave change. Some of you may remember what Cephalus says about wealth, acquisition, in the beginning of the *Republic*, and the view was rather that it is proper to manage—indeed, to preserve the household or the estate one has inherited [rather] than to increase it. The third point, made by Socrates but emphatically ascribed by him to Critobulus, is this: that a household consists of those things and only of those things which a man knows how to *use*. What makes things wealth is not only their usefulness in general, however, but one's knowledge of how to use it. More generally stated, *knowledge* makes things, transforms things in general into wealth, into *chremata*. We may remind ourselves for one moment of an alternative view, that of Locke, according to which it is not knowledge but labor which makes wealth. But this much as a recapitulation and we should now go on to paragraph 16, but I invite any questions and objections you have to what I said today or last time. Oh, yes. . . . All right, Mr. Flomed, will you read paragraph sixteen?

**Reader:**<sup>iii</sup> “Yes, so far, so good Socrates. But sometimes we come across persons possessed of knowledge and means whereby they can increase their estates if they work, and we find that they are unwilling to do so; and consequently we see that their knowledge profits them nothing. What

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<sup>ii</sup> William Petty (1623-1687) served in the governments of Cromwell, James II, and Charles II. He was secretary to Thomas Hobbes. His major works are *A Treatise of Taxes and Contributions* (1662), and *Political Arithmetic* (pub. 1690).

<sup>iii</sup> Several students served as reader in the course. Since they changed between and sometimes within sessions, the student reading from the text is designated simply here and throughout as “Reader.”

are we to make of that? In these cases, surely, neither their knowledge nor their property is wealth.” (I.16)

**LS:** So Critobulus seems to distinguish here three things: knowledge; what we would call today “capital,” say, land; and three, willingness to work. So knowledge alone is not enough to become wealthy, but capital and willingness to work is needed in addition. You see also that Critobulus, he speaks now of knowledge, of branches of knowledge, as wealth. Previously, what Socrates—<sup>3</sup>and he had spoken of [was] knowing how to use; that is a certain shift here. For example, you may know how to use a razor, but this can hardly be called a branch of knowledge. We will see later on what the consequences of this are. Maybe he’s looking for that branch of knowledge which is most preferable from the point of view of increasing one’s wealth. It will depend, that will come here that later on. So he asserts there are people who have capital and their knowledge but are unwilling to work. What does Socrates say about these people?

**Reader:**

“Are you trying to raise a discussion about slaves, Critobulus?”

“Oh no, not at all: I am referring to persons of whom some, at any rate, are considered men of the highest lineage. I observe that there are persons skilled at the arts of war and peace, as the case may be, who are unwilling to practice them, and the reason, I think, is just this, that they have no master over them.”

**LS:** So they are far being from slaves. They are free men and noble men . . . . Yes, what else does he say?

**Reader:** ““What, no master over them, when in spite of their prayers for prosperity and their desires to do what will bring them good, they are thwarted in their intentions by the powers that rule them?”” (I.17-18)

**LS:** Yes, well, that there—Socrates rightly sees [that] these people, they wish or pray to be prosperous, to be wealthy, and they wish also, they are willing to do that from which they could get <sup>4</sup>the good things, and yet they are prevented by something else. And who can prevent them, except some rulers? Yes.

**Reader:** ““And who, pray, may these unseen rulers be . . . ?”

“No, not unseen, but open and undisguised, surely!””

**LS:** That’s the first time that Socrates swears by Zeus. So these rulers are very visible and not invisible rulers like Zeus. That’s what Socrates says. Yes.

**Reader:** ““And very vicious rulers they are too, as you yourself must see, if at least you regard idleness and moral cowardice and negligence as vice.””

**LS:** Moral cowardice, softness of the soul.

**Reader:** ““Aye, and then there was the set of deceitful mistresses that pretended to be pleasures—such as gambling and consorting with bad companions: even the victims of their

deception find as time goes on that these, after all, are really pains concealed beneath a thin veneer of pleasure, and that they are hindering them from all profitable work by their influence over them.’” (I.19-20)

**LS:** Yes, so there are these deceitful lords and ladies who prevent people from working properly, and they are both mentioned here, but Critobulus is not satisfied.

**Reader:** ““But there are other men, Socrates, whose energy is not hindered by these influences, in fact they have an eager desire to work and to make an income: nevertheless they exhaust their estates and are beset with difficulties.””

**LS:** So in other words, they are not kept back by any masters, any lords or ladies of this kind, but what is it that he is saying then?

**Reader:** ““Yes, they too are slaves, and hard indeed are their masters: some are in bondage to gluttony, some to lechery, some to drink, some to foolish and to costly ambitions. And so hard is the rule of these passions over every man who falls into their clutches, that so long as they see that he is strong and capable of work, they force him to pay over all of the profits of his toil, and spend it on their own desires: but no sooner do they find that he is too old to work, than they leave him to his old age of misery, and try to fasten the yoke on other shoulders.”” (I.21-22)

**LS:** One may wonder whether these four additional ladies were not excluded by Critobulus’s preceding remark. Although he had not mentioned them, although Socrates had not mentioned them, he spoke of people who are at least ruining their estates for some unknown reason. Yes.

**Reader:** ““Ah, Critobulus, we must fight for our freedom against these tyrants as persistently as if they were armed men trying to enslave us. Indeed, open enemies may be gentlemen, and when they enslave us, may, by chastening, purge us of our faults and cause us to live better lives in the future. But such mistresses as these never cease to plague men in body and soul and estate all the time that they have dominion over them.”” (I.23)

**LS:** Yes. Now this—that is the first discussion of the conditions of the household, the only one given in this work. And we have seen that there are three necessary and sufficient conditions of management of the household: knowledge, capital, willingness to work—willingness to work not impeded by softness of the soul and incontinence. *Are they sufficient?* Is a man who has the knowledge and the capital and the willingness to work, works hard, will he necessarily be successful? Well, let us look only at one passage and then we should as much as possible follow the sequel of the argument, in chapter five where Critobulus’s final objection to Socrates’ economic teaching is mentioned, and . . . .

**Reader:**

“Well, Socrates,” replied Critobulus to this, “I think you are right so far. But in husbandry a man can rely very little on forecast. For hailstorms and frosts sometimes, and droughts and rains and blight, ruin schemes well planned and well carried out: And sometimes well-bred stock is miserably destroyed by an outbreak of disease.”

“Well,” said Socrates in reply, “I thought you knew Critobulus, that the operations of husbandry no less than those of war are in the hands of the gods. And you observe, I supposed, that men engaged in war try to propitiate the gods before taking action: and with sacrifices and omens seek to know what they ought to do, and what they ought not to do: and for the business of husbandry do you think it less necessary to ask the blessing of the gods?” (V.18-20)

**LS:** That’s good, there. So in other words, these three things mentioned <sup>5</sup>in the first chapter are not sufficient. There is needed also the blessing of the gods, or at least the absence of anger of the gods. But this is not mentioned in the first chapter. One must wonder why. Well, we have seen last time that when Socrates spoke about property, the possessions, he abstracted from the legality of the possession, from justice, and was concerned only with the useful. But according to Socrates, piety consists in worshipping the gods according to law. An abstraction from law as such will include an abstraction from piety. So that statement about the economic art in the first chapter is not exhaustive: it omits a crucial point. This much about the first [chapter]<sup>6</sup>. Before we turn to the second<sup>7</sup>, I repeat my monotonous question. Does anyone object? . . . Are the tools of an artisan . . . or is the means of production . . . Mines? Silver Mines? . . . This you can buy.

**Student:** The blessing of the gods . . .

**LS:** Yes, but then one could rightly say . . . what I call capital . . . If you tried to charm . . . an investor . . .

**Student:** But there are constant wars going on around your household and armies running across your farm . . .

**LS:** I see, yes. But that goes beyond the competence of the economist and would be a difficulty to be solved by the city. But you seem to have [what from] the point of view of the economic art is called chance, accidents, and that is providence, [it] belongs to the gods. There are other things: that a man may have all the three conditions and then suddenly die—that is something which is not provided for by the economic art and I fear not even by the medical art. So there is a large area which is not subject to the human control. It simply is . . . the domain of the gods. We turn now to the next chapter, to chapter two, and in this chapter we will see that what has previously been found out about the economic art is applied to Socrates and Critobulus but, as we will see, this is not merely an application of the previously established standard to these two human beings, but<sup>8</sup> through that it deepens our understanding of this standard itself. One may say, generally speaking<sup>9</sup>, if someone writes a treatise on an art as Xenophon wrote treatises on the art of horsemanship, one does not necessarily become interested in the author, but if a man writes a dialogue on an art, as Cicero did, one necessarily becomes interested in the human beings who converse. And we have already seen in reading the first chapter that there were peculiar differences between Socrates and Critobulus, Socrates making this kind of contribution, and Critobulus another kind. What does it say?

**Reader:** “The word was now with Critobulus, who continued thus—”

**LS:** Not “thus,” but “in about this manner.” It’s not meant to be a verbatim report.



**Reader:** ““Well, I think you have told me quite enough about such passions as these, and when I examine myself I find, I think, that I have them fairly well under control—””

**LS:** So he examines himself without being asked by Socrates to examine himself; he examines himself and finds he is in a satisfactory condition at least as far as continence is concerned. Yes.

**Reader:** ““and therefore, if you will advise me to what I should do to increase my estate, I don’t think those mistresses, as you call them, are likely to hinder me. So do not hesitate to give me any good advice you can; unless, indeed, you have made up your mind that we are rich enough already, Socrates, so think we have no need of more money?”” (II.1)

**LS:** That is a possibility. They were very wealthy men; his father was Crito, who we all know, and they were very wealthy people. So if they are so wealthy as he indicates, there is no need for the economic art if the economic art is the art of increasing one’s wealth, because they have reached a saturation point. Now Critobulus has spoken of “us,” meaning, I am sure, himself and his family, but Socrates misunderstands or pretends to misunderstand, as you can see from the sequel.

**Reader:**

“Oh, if you mean to include me, I certainly think I have no need of more money and am rich enough. But you seem to me to be quite poor, Critobulus, and at times, I assure you, I feel quite sorry for you.”

“And how much, pray,” asked Critobulus, laughing—” (II.2-3)

**LS:** Now—yes, because it is very funny that Socrates should say he is rich.

**Reader:**

“And how much would your property fetch at a sale, do you suppose, Socrates, and how much would mine?”

“Well, if I found a good buyer, I think the whole of my goods and chattels, including the house, might readily sell for five minae. Yours, I feel sure, would fetch more than a hundred times that sum.” (II.3)

**LS:** Yes. Now Socrates would then not—being wealthy enough, would not need the economic art. And this would mean that the economic art does not necessarily belong to the best way of life, to the blessed way of life of Socrates, and only inferior people, and that means almost all men apart from the few, need the economic art. To that extent, the discussion here throws light on the status of the art. And Socrates swears here again, and it is clear why he swears here, I believe, because what he says here is so strange that it is in need of confirmation.

**Reader:**

“And in spite of that estimate, you really think you have no need of money, and pity me for my poverty?”

“Yes, because my property is sufficient to satisfy my wants, but I don’t think that you would have enough to keep up the style that you are living in and to support your reputation, even if your fortune were three times what it is.”

“How can that be?” exclaimed Critobulus. (II.3-5)

**LS:** Socrates is wealthy because he needs so little, and the very small property which he has is sufficient for keeping his body and soul together. Yes.

**Reader:**

“Because in the first place,” explained Socrates, “I notice that you are bound to offer many large sacrifices; else, I fancy, you would get into trouble with gods and men alike.”

**LS:** Let us—since Xenophon doesn’t do it, let us [for]<sup>10</sup> Xenophon [apply]<sup>11</sup> this to Socrates. Socrates is not obliged to bring frequently large sacrifices, with very little, but one cannot help thinking of the cock which he owed, perhaps which he still owed at the time of his death, and characteristically together with Crito, Critobulus’s father. Yes.

**Reader:**

“Secondly, it is your duty to entertain many strangers, on a generous scale too. Thirdly, you have to give dinners and play the benefactor to the citizens, or you lose your following.” (II.5)

**LS:** Your following, your allies, your comrades, your fellow fighters. You fight with them. And of Socrates it is indicated in the *Memorabilia*, and if you want to look up the passage in Book I, chapter two, paragraphs 11 and 14, that the man who can possess the art of persuasion in the way in which Socrates possessed it does not need any allies. It is in conformity with what we see here [that] Socrates does not need any allies, therefore he does not need to wine and dine. Yes.

**Reader:**

“Moreover, I observe that already the state is exacting heavy contributions from you: you must needs keep horses, pay for choruses and gymnastics competitions, and accept presidencies; and if war breaks out, I know they will require you to maintain a ship and pay taxes that will nearly crush you. Whenever you seem to fall short of what is expected of you, the Athenians will certainly punish you, as though they had caught you robbing them. Besides all this, I notice that you imagine yourself to be a rich man; you are indifferent to money, and yet go courting minions, as though the cost were nothing to you. And that is why I pity you. I fear that you may come to grief and find yourself reduced to penury.” (II.6-7)

**LS:** Yes, so that’s clear, <sup>12</sup>because relative to the demands and the reputation which Critobulus must maintain he is a poor man and must therefore be and become a money-maker on a larger scale. Yes, now what about Socrates? Socrates turns to his own case.

**Reader:** “Now, if I ran short of money, no doubt—”

**LS:** If I needed something in addition, meaning in addition to what he owns, maybe the house, the furniture and the other things he might have. Yes.

**Reader:** “Now, if I needed something in addition, no doubt you know as well as I do that I should not lack helpers who would need to contribute very little to fill my cup to overflowing.

But your friends, though far better supplied with means to support their establishment than you, yet look to receive help from you.” (II.8)

**LS:** Yes. That is, *your* friends, Critobulus’ friends, and that [refers back to] the first part of the preceding sentence, [in] which Socrates speaks, not explicitly but in fact of his, Socrates’, friends. So the friends provide Socrates with whatever he might need in addition. Two thoughts. Socrates might be compelled to increase his estate, in other words, whenever that may be, and then Socrates’ friends come to his help. But you remember perhaps from the first chapter, when wealth in general was discussed, it appeared in the words of Critobulus that friends are money, “by Zeus.” Here we have the proof. So—but this has a further implication. Socrates does need the economic art, he does need the economic art because he was compelled from time to time to increase his wealth, and Socrates is therefore an economist. The economic art belongs also to the blessed and not only to the non-blessed.

**Reader:**

“I cannot dispute this Socrates,” said Critobulus, “but it is time for you to take me in hand, and see that I don’t become a real object of pity.”

At this Socrates exclaimed, “What, don’t you think it’s strange, Critobulus that a little while ago, when I said I was rich, you laughed at me, as though I did not even know the meaning of riches, and would not cease until you had proved me wrong and made me own that my possessions were less than one-hundredth part of yours, and yet now you bid me take you in hand and see that you don’t become in literal truth a poor man?” (II.9)

**LS:** Socrates exaggerates this thing, doesn’t he? That Critobulus has forced . . . forced him . . . to admit that he is a poor man, and as we have seen, Socrates that did not need any compunction . . . to admit that. What this means, we must at least try to find out later.

**Reader:** “Well, Socrates, I see that you understand one process by which wealth is created.”

**LS:** Ya, ya, one wealth-producing work. What that is, is not stated. We would have to guess what it is. I think we can say that part of it, anyways, would be that which enables him to use his friends to help him: his ability to converse.

**Reader:** “I see that you understand one wealth-producing work—how to create a balance.” (II.10)

**LS:** Yes, that is very—because he is an economist . . . .

**Reader:**

“So a man who saves on a small income can, I suppose, very easily show a large surplus with a large one.”

“Then don’t you remember saying just now in our conversation, when you wouldn’t give me leave to utter a syllable, that if a man doesn’t know how to manage horses, his horses are not wealth to him, nor his land, sheep, money, or anything else if he doesn’t know how to manage them? Now these are the sources from which income is derived: and how do you suppose that I

can possibly know how to manage any of these things, seeing that I never yet possessed any one of them?” (II.10-11)

**LS:** You see there is a slight shift. Hitherto . . . Socrates had spoken of his wealth and had said that it is . . . money and now he speaks of his income producing wealth. That’s something very different. A house and furniture do not produce income, and Socrates has no income producing wealth. Let us again look at some later utterance in chapter 20, paragraph 15, where Socrates learns from a perfect gentleman the rudiments of the economic art. Only that—we need only the last part on economic art. He who does not know any other wealth-producing art, nor is willing to farm is patently a thief or a robber or a beggar, or else he is wholly irrational. Now Socrates does not in the ordinary sense know such a wealth-producing art, nor is he willing to farm, and therefore he seems to be a most unjust man. And that is how Socrates would appear to a perfect gentleman who looked down on him as a kind of pauper, and that is not the same as bad mannered.

**Reader:**

“Now these are the sources from which income is derived: and how can you suppose that I can possibly know how to manage any of these things seeing that I never yet possessed any [of these things, seeing that I never yet possessed any of them?”]<sup>iv</sup> “Still we held that, even if a man happens to have no wealth, there is such a thing as a science of household management. Then what reason is there that you should not know it?” (\*\*REF)

**LS:** Socrates—here Critobulus beats Socrates with his own weapon. One does not have to have a household in order to possess the art of household management. Why, then, should Socrates not manage Critobulus’ estate? Well, that is rather not too surprising.

**Reader:** ““Exactly the same reason, of course, that a man would have for not knowing how to play on the flute if he had never possessed one himself and had never borrowed one to learn on. That is just my case with regard to estate management; for never having possessed wealth myself—” (II.12-13)

**LS:** The tools, the tools for it, for what is commonly called *chremata*.

**Reader:**

“Never yet having had the tools for it, myself, I have not had an opportunity of learning on an instrument of my own, and nobody has ever let me handle his, until you made your offer. Beginners, I fancy, are apt to spoil the lyres they learn on; and if I attempted to learn to manage estates by practicing on yours, possibly I might spoil it entirely for you.”

“Ah, Socrates!” rejoined Critobulus, “I see you are eager to avoid giving me any help towards lightening the weight of my troublesome duties.”

“Not at all, by Zeus” said Socrates, “I am all eagerness to tell you all I know. Suppose you had come to me for fire; and I, having none by me, had taken you to some place where you could get it; you would not, I think, have found fault with me: or, if you had asked for water, and I, having none myself, had brought you to some other place for it, I feel sure you would not have found

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<sup>iv</sup> There is a break in the tape here; the words in brackets have been inserted from the translation.

fault with me for that either: or suppose you wanted to learn music with me and I directed you to persons far more skilled in music than I am, who would be grateful to you for taking lessons with them, what fault could you find with me for doing so?"

"None," if I were fair, Socrates." (II.13-16)

**LS:** Yes, that's the first time . . . .

**Reader:**

"Well, then, Critobulus, I will direct you to others far more skilled than I in the things you now seek to learn from me. I confess that I have made a point of finding out who are the greatest masters of the various sciences to be found in Athens. For observing once that the same pursuits lead in one case to great poverty and in another case to great riches, I was filled with amazement, and thought it worthwhile to consider what this could mean." (II.16-17)

**LS:** Yes, what would be . . . .

**Reader:** "And now on consideration I found that these things happen quite naturally. For I saw that those who follow these pursuits carelessly suffer loss, and I discovered that those who devote themselves earnestly [to them] accomplish them more quickly, more easily and with more profit. I think that if you would elect to learn from these, you too with God's favor would turn out a clever man of business.'" (II.17-18)

**LS:** Ya, ya, a clever money-maker. If the god will not oppose it with this qualification that comes in here. So all branches of knowledge are forms of money-making, the art of money-making accompanies all arts. They get paid for what they do. Is therefore not the art of money-making the art of arts? . . . which accompanies all arts—the question which is forced upon us, by the way, by the argument of the First Book of the *Republic*, which is also implied here. And one consequence follows: if the economic art is the art of increasing one's wealth, one should look for the most lucrative means, the art by which one can increase one's wealth to the highest degree. Whether this is so in fact, we must leave open for the further development. Critobulus will receive instruction. This instruction, as it appears from *Oeconomicus*, is given <sup>13</sup>by Socrates, and Socrates transmits to Critobulus what he has learned from a perfect gentleman called Ischomachus. Now these—Socrates did not pay for his instruction, and Critobulus does not pay for his instruction, and precisely for this reason one may say that both Socrates' learning and Socrates' teaching are acts of economy in the particular sense of economic which means without using anything, with thrift. So this <sup>14</sup>will happen in the rest of the dialogue. Now any point you would like to make?

**Student:** . . . .

**LS:** Yes, here Socrates teaches the art of economics, and he has learned it previously from a master economist. He did not pay for receiving the teaching, nor does he take pay for transmitting it. These, too, are economic acts because saving money is also economic—

[break in tape]

**Student:** . . . .

**LS:** Yes. Well, but it's not quite the same because there it is connected <sup>15</sup>with the Delphic oracle, to the Delphic oracle. But here Socrates was eager to find out who the most knowing men in Athens were in order to help his friends, and send them to the right kind of teacher. Yes?

**Student:** . . . .

**LS:** Yes, this cannot be inferred from this passage alone, because one could very well say that he is speaking here of those arts or sciences which are wealth-producing, and not of the others. There is evidence in Xenophon for what you say, but it is not here.

**Student:** [Largely inaudible student comment concerning the art of arts]

**LS:** Well, my . . . are the ordinary capital . . . . That is true also of a smith, perhaps even of lawyers and physicians . . . . So if this were generally true, one would have to say that the desire for money, and the possession of the money-making art, is the art animating all arts. And then there are—

**Student:** In that sense it is an art?

**LS:** Yes, it is an art, and many people are very inept at it and other people are very apt at this. This seems to show that <sup>16</sup>in the wider sense of the word, it is an art.

**Student:** Are you implying that the economic, the money-making art, would include within it the principles of the specific arts?

**LS:** No, no, no. That—I don't think so, that is not it. But still, in a way it seems to be the art, I mean if it animates all arts, it can be said that it is the art most truly. That does not mean that they can be derived from it, the use.

**Student:** I would think that from what you suggested last time, that if one could say that Socrates's own art of conversation, that's an art, is a money-making art. And his own art could provide the principles also of his own money making.

**LS:** Yes, that is true, but it is not quite the same as the economic art that is here developed. Because Socrates' special case, that he <sup>17</sup>in case of need is helped by his friends, that he is able to handle his friends in such a way that they eagerly come to his assistance. This can only be with some irony called an economic activity. But since Socrates needs that wealth, needs that money for keeping his family and body and soul together, therefore it can also be called economic. There is a certain ambiguity there created by the very fact that Socrates is such an unusual man, and this will become clearer and clearer as we go. Yes?

**Student:** . . . .

**LS:** Yes, that is true. Perhaps we can make a distinction between the common meaning of economics according to which it requires these three things, and let's say an exalted meaning, according to which it requires only knowledge and the willingness to do the work, ya? That would be the case of Socrates.

**Student:** [Inaudible comment from the same student about moneymaking]

**LS:** Ya, but that would mean according to the common understanding that a man gives instruction, say in flute-playing or in rhetoric and gets money for it, and you know that for much, that . . . was refused. Socrates is in error from the point of view of common sense. Socrates' case [break in tape] what Xenophon means and Plato too, is that this marginal case is precisely the normal case<sup>18</sup>, the *normative* case. And the highly theoretic inference consists in this interplay between the common and the exalted. Socrates is ridiculous, as the philosopher is ridiculous when he comes down to the cave, and on the other hand, <sup>19</sup>the people of the cave are ridiculous from the point of view of philosophy. This is yet—too. Mr. . . .

**Student:** . . . .

**LS:** Yes, and therefore—

**Student:** . . . Socrates is a man who knows that he knows nothing, he is a man who knows others . . . who knows what knowledge is.

**LS:** Yes, and that is stipulated of those who have complete knowledge of the art of . . . . But for that we must wait until we come to that . . . . But he doesn't mean more than: I cannot help you, Critobulus, in your embarrassment, but I know the best economists in Athens and they will help you. And therefore, just as I know the best knowers in every other field, in economics, there would simply be a simple external criterion: a man who is prosperous at getting wealthier and wealthier and wealthier without getting into trouble with the law courts—so presumably a just, a law-abiding man. He would seem to be a good helper.

**Student:** . . . .

**LS:** Yes, Socrates has the economic art, but he has never exercised it.

**Student:** . . . .

**LS:** Yes, that is however the wider. I mean, that is to say the exalted meaning of economic art. In that sense, Socrates is an example; but in the common, wider sense, the economic art is the art of wealth *increasing*. That is something very different.

**Student:** . . . .

**LS:** Can you repeat that?

**Student:** . . . .

**LS:** Yes, but that is part of the economic art, just as using one's enemies for one's benefit, you know, as we, you have seen in the first chapter. One can make, increase one's wealth by a judicious use of one's enemies, perhaps in war or through war.

**Student:** . . . .

**LS:** No, it belongs to—on any level, that would be true, don't you think? I mean, if wealth means useful possessions, and one possesses friends, and if one possesses them in a way that they are useful to one—well, they are wealth, just the same as would apply to enemies.

**Student:** . . . .

**LS:** Yes. Yes. I believe we have answered that question—we, it is very, shall I say, very unpleasant of us to raise the question of Socrates' invisible means of support. But Xenophon in the *Oeconomicus* forces us to raise the question. And we get the answer: his friends. And therefore the beginning of the section on friendship at the beginning of the *Oeconomicus*, literally. . . . This question, I think we will settle. We don't have a clear—we haven't exhausted it. Now let us perhaps turn to the next chapter. Yes.

**Reader:**

"Socrates," explained Critobulus, on hearing this, "I don't intend to let you go now, until you have proved to my satisfaction what you have promised, in the presence of our friends here to prove." (III.1)

**LS:** He speaks of the friends here, yes. One of them is of course Xenophon. Xenophon was present for the conversation, as appears from the very first sentence of the *Oeconomicus*. And Critobulus asked that Socrates should keep his promises here and now. And Socrates can do that. That is a question. Assuming that Socrates is not such a perfect master of the economic art, how can he keep that promise now without bringing in some experts from outside? He would have to bring Critobulus to the experts. What he will do in this chapter is to specify his promise by breaking down the economic art into six parts, and then we must search for ourselves whether Socrates is a master in all six parts of that art. If not, we need outsiders. And that . . . . Yes.

**Reader:**

"Well then," said Socrates, "what if I prove then to your satisfaction, Critobulus, to begin with, that some men spend large sums in building houses that are useless, while others build houses perfect in all respects for much less? Will you think that I am putting before you one of the operations that constitute estate management?"

"Yes, certainly." (III.1)

**LS:** So this is the first one, building of houses, as the product is so-called the house. Yes?

**Reader:**

"And what if I show you next the companion to this—that some possess many costly belongings and cannot use them at need, and do not even know whether they are safe and sound, and so are



continually worried themselves and worrying their servants, whereas others, though they possess not more, but even less, have whatever they want ready for use?" (III.2)

**LS:** So these are furniture and other things one has in the house, <sup>20</sup>that also belongs to that art of household management. Yes.

**Reader:** "What is the reason for this, then, Socrates? Is it not simply this, that the former stow their things away anywhere and the latter have everything neatly arranged in some place?" (III.3)

**LS:** Yes, in its place.

**Reader:**

"Yes, of course, arranged carefully in the proper place, not just anywhere."

"Your point, I take it, is that this too is an element in estate management."

"Then what if I showed you—" (III.3-4)

**LS:** Wait here a moment. Socrates corrects here Critobulus' notion of *order* in the house. Things must be separated, clearly, but even by making mistakes: for example, I might bring all of the kitchen utensils into the bedroom and all the bedroom utensils like blankets into the kitchen. So everything is in its place, but not in the place in which it belongs. So Critobulus has apparently an insufficient understanding of order. That has some consequences later. Yes.

**Reader:** "Then what if I show you besides that in some households nearly all the servants are in fetters and yet continually try to run away, whereas in others they are under no restraint and are willing to work and to stay at their posts? Won't you think that here too I am pointing out to you a notable effect of estate management?" (III.4)

**LS:** "A notable work"; first is house making, and second is order of things within the house, and then the treatment of servants. The servants are called here <sup>21</sup>*oiketai*, which comes from *oikos*, house.

**Reader:**

"Yes, of course; very much so."

"And that when men farm the same kind of land, some are poverty-stricken and declare that they are ruined by farming, and others do well with the farm and have all they want in abundance?"

"Yes of course: for maybe some spend money not on necessary purposes only, but on what brings harm to the owner and to the estate." (III.4-5)

**LS:** That's . . . Critobulus.

**Reader:**

"Perhaps there are such people. But I am referring rather to those who haven't the money to meet even necessary expenses, though professing to be farmers."

"Now what could be the reason for that, Socrates?"

"I will take you to these too; and when you watch them, you will find out, I fancy." (III.5-6)

**LS:** You will find here what are the reasons. I will take *you* to them, Socrates will be . . . Critobulus will be led by Socrates to the . . . masters or farmers in the various parts of the economic art. And Critobulus is to form his own judgment on the places. But Critobulus is not sure that he is able to form such judgments. Yes.

**Reader:**

“By Zeus,<sup>v</sup> that is, if I can.”

“Then you must watch, and try by experiment whether you are capable of understanding. At present I observe that when a comedy is to be seen, you get up very early and walk a very long way and press me eagerly to go to the play with you. But you have never yet invited me to see a drama of real life like this.” (III.6-7)

**LS:** Drama, that is, but to such a kind of work, farming and the various arts, a drama is a bad addition. So in other words, we see now our first glimpse of the defects of Critobulus. He loves comedies, and therefore he gets up very early in the morning and persuades Socrates eagerly to watch comedies, or persuades him to watch comedies eagerly. It’s deplorable that Socrates should do that instead of reminding Critobulus of his duties, but perhaps some good reason could be given: that it was the only way which Socrates could gain the affection of Critobulus and therefore his willingness to listen to Socrates’ sterner remarks at the proper time. And now . . . after this rebuke of Critobulus.

**Reader:** “You think me ridiculous, don’t you, Socrates?”

“You think yourself far more so, I am sure.” (III.7)

**LS:** Ya, so what does this mean? First he spoke of comedy, and now Critobulus, applying to himself, says: I will appear ridiculous in your eyes. Take it, take this together with comedy: Could one not think that Critobulus will not only be a spectator of comedies but an object of comedy, if he continues to live as he has now hitherto? So this was the subject of farming with a kind of intermezzo regarding comedy. Now next . . .

**Reader:**

“You think yourself far more so, I am sure. And suppose I show you that some have been brought to penury by keeping horses, while others prosper by doing so, and moreover glory in their gain?”

“Well, I too see and know instances of both; I am not one of the gainers for all that.”

“The fact is you watch them just as you watch the actors in tragedy or comedy, not, I suppose, to become a playwright, but for the pleasure of seeing and hearing something. And perhaps there is no harm in that, because you don’t want to write plays; but seeing that you are forced to meddle with horses, don’t you think that common-sense requires you to see—” (III.8-9)

**LS:** Don’t you think to be foolish. Ya, he almost calls Critobulus here foolish.

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<sup>v</sup> In translation: “Of course”

**Reader:** ““to see that you are not<sup>vi</sup> ignorant of the business, the more so as to the self-same horses are both good to use and profitable to sell?””

**LS:** Yes. Now let us continue with this for one moment. We learn now that Critobulus does not go merely to comedies but also to tragedies. This is akin but in the reverse <sup>22</sup>as what Adeimantus thought in the Third Book of the *Republic*, when the question comes up of a certain kind of poetry and Socrates states the character of that kind in very general terms. Adeimantus, understanding him, says: Oh, you mean tragedy. Yes, Socrates says, and comedy. Yes, and comedy. Here it is the opposite: comedies and tragedies, tragedy and comedy. And Critobulus knows the men who pursue horse-breeding lucratively and ruinously. This we have not seen. Now what does he go on to?

**Reader:** “Would you have me break in colts, Socrates?” (III.10)

**LS:** Ya, that is sudden; why does he bring that up? There is a certain preparation here. Socrates had spoken first of the *selling* of horses, that is, gainful for sale. And that is in Greek *pōlēsis* and colts are *pōloi*, and this then is a transition. And now what does he—?

**Reader:**

“Of course not, no more than I would have you buy children to train as agricultural laborers; but horses and human beings alike, I think, on reaching a certain age forthwith become useful and go on improving. I can also show you that husbands differ widely in the treatment of their wives, and some succeed in getting their co-operation, and thereby increase their estates.” (III.10)

**LS:** Ya, their cooperation towards the common increasing of their estate. So that is the function of the woman; the wife is seen here from a strictly economic angle of what she contributes to increase the wealth. Now, then.

**Reader:**

“while others bring utter ruin on their houses by their behavior to them.”

“And ought one to blame the husband or the wife for that, Socrates?”

“When a sheep is ailing,” said Socrates, “we generally blame the shepherd, and when a horse if vicious, we generally find fault with his rider. In the case of the wife, if she receives instruction in the right way from her husband and yet does badly, perhaps she should bear the blame; but if the husband does not instruct his wife in the right way of doing things, and so finds her ignorant, should he not bear the blame himself? Anyhow, Critobulus, you should tell us the truth, for we are all friends here. Is there anyone to whom you commit more affairs of importance than you commit to your wife?” (III.11-12).

**LS:** So here is the first time that the teaching is applied to an interlocutor by Socrates, because his self-examination, which took place at the beginning of the second chapter, that was Socrates’ own work. And there’s a reason why this can decently be done, Socrates says: We are all friends, and therefore you may tell the truth about such a private subject.

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<sup>vi</sup> I.e., if you do not consider how you will not be

**Reader:**

“There is not.”

“Is there is anyone with whom you talk less?”

“There are few or none, I confess.”

**LS:** Talk less than you and your wife. Yes?

**Reader:**

“There are few or none, I confess.”

“And you married her when she was a mere child and had seen and heard almost nothing?”

**LS:** Yes, that was, it was . . . . The way in which opinion . . . they had married “had seen as little as possible and heard as little as possible.” We’ll see this later at much greater length.

Yes. . . . So she knows what she wants, she is completely . . . and therefore she does not want to talk to him. Yes.

**Reader:**

“Then it would be far more surprising if she understood what she should say or do than if she made a mistake?”

“But what of the husbands, who as you say—”

**LS:** Critobulus is of course still responsible because <sup>23</sup>he took her over in a state of complete ignorance from her parents, and yet he should have taught her, but he neglected to. Therefore he is in the position of a horseman who is responsible for the inadequacy of his horse.

**Reader:**

“But what of the husbands who, as you say, have good wives, Socrates? Did they train them themselves?”

“There’s nothing like investigation—” (III.14-15)

**LS:** Ya, there is an additional look at it, a further look at it. . . . Yes?

**Reader:** “I will introduce Aspasia to you, and she will explain the whole matter to you with more knowledge than I possess.” (III.14)

**LS:** Aspasia was the famous girlfriend of Pericles. And here is again, here is a clear example of the additional teaching which will be given to Critobulus outside of this dialogue. One of the masters to whom Critobulus will be brought by Socrates is a mistress, <sup>24</sup>Aspasia. Yes?

**Reader:** “I think that the wife who is a good partner in the household contributes just as much as her husband who is good; because the incomings for the most part are the result of the husband’s exertions, but the outgoings are controlled mostly by the wife’s dispensation. If both do their part well, the estate is increased; if they act incompetently, it is diminished. If you think you want to know about other branches of knowledge, I fancy I can show you people who acquit themselves creditably in any one of them.” (III.15-16).

**LS:** Yes. Socrates does not claim to be good at three things, on managing wives, and especially here, because the question is why the wife is considered exclusively as a help in increasing wealth. Managing one's wife is a branch of knowledge. At the end, in the last sentence, Socrates does not explicitly say—that confirms in a way what Mr. Berns suggested before, that Critobulus might need these other sciences for increasing wealth. But this alternative is not pursued in any way. Now we considered . . . . Some of you were perhaps smiling about what was happening here. That is . . . . Now we have here <sup>25</sup>six subjects: the house; next is the furniture, the servants; and then we have farming, horsemanship; and the wife. The first, first . . . order is clear. House. And what is in the house? And what is derivative from the house? The servants, *oiketai*. Farming and horsemanship take place outside. But the woman's place of course is within the house. So the order is not quite lucid regarding the second part of this.

What is the connection of these three items: farming, horsemanship, wives? Here . . . Critobulus is a friend of comedies, and he was with Socrates to go and look at and listen to the comedies. What is the beginning of *the* Socratic comedy, the *Clouds*? There are three subjects: the farmer, <sup>26</sup>[Strepsiades], the horsemanship of his son, and the wife of Strepsiades, the mother of Pheidippides, who is responsible in a way for the way in which Pheidippides has developed. Perhaps we can say that the *Oeconomicus*, the Socratic discourse of Xenophon, is the response to *the* Socratic comedy and therefore, I say, therefore not completely free of comical traits itself, for <sup>27</sup>to take issue with the comical traits without entering this field to some extent. Be this as it may, there are six parts of the economic art mentioned. There is one point which we might now consider. In all cases, Socrates mentions first the bungler and then the master of that particular branch, except in the case of the wife, where he mentions first the master and then the bungler. And this indicates the crucial importance which the wife will play in this dialogue, because later on, when we see Socrates in the position of a pupil listening to Ischomachus' teaching, we will see that the first four chapters of that teaching are devoted to the management of the wife and that is for some reasons the primary theme. Now, is there any point that you would like to raise?

**Student:** . . . .

**LS:** The transition to whether one should bring up colts? Socrates was [speaking of] selling horses, *pōlēsis*, and then Critobulus understands it, induced by the word, *polēsis*, that Socrates was thinking of colts, *poloi*, and to breaking colts, and that breaking colts was good for business. It is—we will see.<sup>28</sup>

**Student:** . . . .

**LS:** No. That didn't happen. Surely not. Perhaps that can be found, but not in here. . . . We will only say that in the immediate sequel it is understood that Critobulus must acquire the moneymaking art. And from all that preceded, you would expect that he would try to learn the most lucrative art, and that would of course in practice mean that Socrates and he would go, say, to wealthiest merchant in Athens, or to the wealthiest mine-owners in Athens, to learn from them better. And <sup>29</sup>a different course is pursued because Critobulus is not interested in the most lucrative but in the most *noble*, that is, to *farming*. In the next two chapters, one finds the case for farming is stated in two different ways, from two different points of view. Perhaps we read the beginning of chapter four.

**Reader:** Sure. “‘Surely Socrates, there is no need to go through the whole list. For it is not—” (IV.1)

**LS:** The whole list of the sciences. Yes?

**Reader:**

“For it is not easy to get workmen who are skilled in all the arts, nor is it possible to become an expert in them. Pray select the branches of knowledge that seem the noblest and would be most suitable for me to cultivate: show me these, and those that practice them; and give me from your own knowledge any help you can towards learning them.”

“Very good, Critobulus—” (IV.1-2)

**LS:** “How nobly you speak,” so that the noble speech [is] to acquire <sup>30</sup>the noblest arts, and not the most lucrative.

**Reader:** “‘for, to be sure, the illiberal arts, as they are called, are spoken against, and are, naturally enough, held in utter disdain in our states. For they spoil the bodies of the workman and the foremen, forcing them to sit still and live indoors, and in some cases to spend the day at the fire.’”

**LS:** He is speaking of smithing.

**Reader:** “‘The softening of the body involves the serious weakening of the mind. Moreover, these so-called illiberal arts leave no spare time for attention to one’s friends and city, so that those who follow them are reputed bad at dealing with friends and bad defenders of their country. In fact, in some of the states, and especially in those reputed warlike, it is not even lawful for any of the citizens to work at illiberal arts.’” (IV.2-3)

**LS:** Yes. So Socrates fully agrees with the common opinion, the *endoxa*, which condemns the banausic arts as ignoble. And he refers especially to the authority of the cities good at war, and that means in the first place Sparta, where such arts . . . . In Athens the situations was different, but Athenian gentlemen held of course the same view. Yes. And this leads them to a further conclusion [that] we need to see.

**Reader:**

“But what arts, pray, do you advise us to follow, Socrates?”

“Need we be ashamed of imitating the king of the Persians?”

**LS:** Let us stop here. So that is a rhetorical question, and the answer is, of course, no. And so the point of view of the noble leads us to that individual or that institution which is most resplendent: the Persian king, [who] would be much grander than anything in Greece, and the Persian king may now be taken in the rest of chapter four as the authority for the praise of the art of farming. The Persian king exercises this art of farming. If even he does it, no one should regard it as ignoble to be a farmer. And what is developed in the rest of the chapter, we will read next time. And in the following chapter, the case for farming is taken up from a non-Persian point of view,

from the point of view of a Greek citizen. And there are observable differences, because in Persia<sup>31</sup> the soldiers are mercenaries, and the farmers are—the poor fellows have to pay the taxes and they have to feed the mercenaries. In Greece, according to this presentation, the farmers and the soldiers are the same kind of men, and we have to make the choice whether we would like to have a citizenry or a mercenary army, a choice which I gather is not immediate to Xenophon's mind. And after this question is settled, that the art of farming is the most desirable art for a young gentleman . . . then is the recapitulation of the preceding argument, after which Socrates takes Critobulus to Ischomachus—not literally, because they continue to stay in the same place where they are, but by a complete retelling, telling to Critobulus what he, Socrates, had learned from his past, and that is the rest of it.

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<sup>1</sup> Deleted “was, that was not”

<sup>2</sup> Deleted “we read”

<sup>3</sup> Deleted “had”

<sup>4</sup> Deleted “them”

<sup>5</sup> Deleted “in the third”

<sup>6</sup> Deleted “question”

<sup>7</sup> Deleted “question”

<sup>8</sup> Deleted “it”

<sup>9</sup> Deleted “one may say”

<sup>10</sup> Deleted “pull”

<sup>11</sup> Deleted “up by”

<sup>12</sup> Deleted “because he was”

<sup>13</sup> Deleted “by Xenophon”

<sup>14</sup> Deleted “is”

<sup>15</sup> Deleted “to”

<sup>16</sup> Deleted “it”

<sup>17</sup> Deleted “is”

<sup>18</sup> Deleted “and that the”

<sup>19</sup> Deleted “how”

<sup>20</sup> Deleted “that is also”

<sup>21</sup> Deleted “by”

<sup>22</sup> Deleted “thing”

<sup>23</sup> Deleted “he had”

<sup>24</sup> Deleted “is”

<sup>25</sup> Deleted “three subjects”

<sup>26</sup> Deleted “the father”

<sup>27</sup> Deleted “its part”

<sup>28</sup> Deleted “Student: Inaudible LS: Pardon?”

<sup>29</sup> Deleted “that is”

<sup>30</sup> Deleted “and”

<sup>31</sup> Deleted “there are”

### Session 3: no date

**Leo Strauss:** [in progress]—remember the main points. I shall not repeat them, but we may have to refer back from time to time to earlier points. One point must be mentioned again: household management is said to be the increase of one's estate, one's household, one's fortune. But from this it would seem to follow that if we want to learn the art of household management, we should consult the men best at getting money, the best money-getter in Athens, say, the wealthiest merchant regardless of whether he is citizen or resident alien. And then one could of course say: Why should we limit ourselves to Athenians? Why not just go straight for the best money-getter in the world or, in other words, for the richest man in the world? That would be the King of Persia. Now this is now done in the fourth chapter, but on somewhat different grounds. Hitherto the point of view was the most lucrative art. Now Critobulus proposes the most noble art, the most or utmost noble art. So this does not mean that the point of view of lucrativeness is forgotten, but that it is subordinated to the point of view of the noble. Of the noble, what is that? Sometimes the Greek authors use the expression "the noble and the just things," and that corresponds roughly to what we understand today by morality. But they make this distinction: the just things, we can say, correspond to what is one's duty. And the noble things are things which go *beyond* the call of duty, at least beyond the call of duty strictly and narrowly understood. Now from this thought they are looking at this desire of Critobulus. They are looking for a noble art, lucrative of course, but lucrative within the limits of the noble. Now, I think we read already paragraphs two and three last time of chapter four, but we might reread them. Here.

**Reader:** "“Very good Critobulus, but—”"

**LS:** Literally, "nobly," you speak nobly; it has something to do with what went before and what follows.

**Reader:** "“For, to be sure, the illiberal arts as they are called, are spoken against, and are, naturally enough, held in utter disdain in our states. For they spoil the bodies of the workmen and the foremen, forcing them to sit still and live indoors, and in some cases to spend the day at the fire. The softening of the body involves a serious weakening of the mind. Moreover, these so-called illiberal arts leave no spare time for attention to one's friends and city, so that those who follow them are reputed bad at dealing with friends and bad defenders of their country. In fact, in some of the states, and especially in those reputed warlike, it is not even lawful for any of the citizens to work at illiberal arts.”" (IV.2-3)

**LS:** And let us stop here for one moment. Now you see there is an emphasis, which comes through even in the translation on *reputation*, on how things are *called*, on opinion. But in this case, as becomes also clear, the reputation is based on fact. The arts called illiberal are in fact illiberal, but still the emphasis on the reputation and opinion must not be forgotten. That will be important for the sequel. Now paragraph four.

**Reader:**



“But what arts, pray, do you advise us to follow Socrates?”

“Need we be ashamed of imitating the king of the Persians? For they say that he pays close attention to husbandry and the art of war, holding that these are two of the noblest and most necessary pursuits.” (IV.4)

**LS:** Yes. So here the king of Persia is taken as a model not merely because he was the wealthiest man but because of his grand reputation, because of this splendor going with kingship. And he proves by his very being that the art of farming is as respectable, as noble, as the art of war, the nobility of which is a foregone conclusion. That is presupposed. And now we must see how this will be established. The king of Persia is a model for the economic arts, and yet his art is naturally called the kingly or royal art. When the relation between the economic art and the royal art is a question, sometimes it is suggested that they are the same art, only the area, the size of the area differs in the two cases. In the household, a small area, and in the kingdom, kingship, a large area. At any rate, if you think of the Persian king as a master economist, we understand economist in a not common way, in an *exalted* way, just as we did when we spoke of Socrates as a master economist. He is that <sup>1</sup>for reasons given in chapter two, but he is not a master economist in the common sense of the word. And so there are two kinds of master economists: the King of Persia and Socrates. And now they are this in obviously very different ways, and we must see who is *truly* the master economist, if any of the two.

**Reader:**

“And do you really believe Socrates,” exclaimed Critobulus upon hearing this, “that the king of the Persians includes husbandry among his occupations?” (IV.5)

**LS:** You see, Critobulus has some doubt because he never was to Persia, and nor was Socrates. But this is a theme which goes through the rest. And how does Socrates answer?

**Reader:** “Perhaps, Critobulus, the following considerations will enable us to discover whether he does so.” (IV.5)

**LS:** That is not a very emphatic assertion of Socrates, as you can see. Yes.

**Reader:**

“We allow that that he pays close attention to warfare, because he has given a standing order to every governor of the nations from which he receives tribute, to supply maintenance for a specified number of horsemen and archers and slingers and light infantry; that they may be strong enough to control his subjects and to protect the country in the event of an invasion; and, apart from these, he maintains garrisons in the citadels. Maintenance for these is supplied by the governor charged with this duty, and the king annually reviews the mercenaries and all the other troops ordered to be under arms, assembling all but the men in the citadels at the place of muster, as it is called: he personally inspects the men who are near his residence, and sends trusted agents to review those who live far away. The officers, whether commanders of garrisons or of regiments or viceroys, who turn out with a full complement of men and parade them equipped with horses and arms in good condition, he promotes in the scale of honor and enriches with large grants of money; but those officers whom he finds to be neglecting the garrisons or making

profit out of them, he punishes severely and appoints others to take their office. These actions, then, seem to us seem to leave no room for question that he pays attention to warfare.” (IV.5-7)

**LS:** Does anyone have more questions? Yes.

**Reader:**

“As for the country, he personally examines so much of it as he sees in the course of his progress through it; and he receives reports from his trusted agents on the territories that he does not see for himself. To those governors who are able to show him that their country is densely populated and that the land is in cultivation and well stocked with the trees of the district and with the crops, he assigns more territory and gives presents, and rewards them with seats of honor. Those whose territory he finds uncultivated and thinly populated either through harsh administration or through contempt or through carelessness, he punishes and, appoints others to take their office.” (IV.8-9)

**LS:** So that is clear then. The king takes care of military matters and also of farming, agriculture, and cattle raising. Next sentence please.

**Reader:** ““By such action, does he seem to provide less for the cultivation of the land by the inhabitants than for its protection by the garrisons?”” (IV.9)

**LS:** That is a question, and we have to wonder whether it is established that the king is as much concerned with farming as he is with warfare. Yes.

**Reader:**

“Moreover, each of these duties is entrusted to a separate class of officers; one class governs the residents and the labourers, and collects tribute from them, the other commands the men under arms and the garrisons. If the commander of a garrison affords insufficient protection to the country, the civil governor and controller of agriculture denounces the commander, setting out that the inhabitants are unable to work the farms for want of protection. If, on the other hand, the commander brings peace to the farms, and the governor nevertheless causes the land to be sparsely populated and idle, the commander in turn denounces the governor.” (IV.9-10)

**LS:** So the civil governor and the military governor seem to be on an equal level, and from this one could infer that the king’s care for farming and the king’s care for war are equally important. Yes.

**Reader:**

“For, roughly speaking, where cultivation is inefficient, the garrisons are not maintained and the tribute cannot be paid. Wherever a viceroy is appointed, he attends to both these matters.”  
At this point Critobulus said: “Well, Socrates, if the Great King does this, it seems to me that he pays as much attention to husbandry as to warfare.” (IV.11-12)

**LS:** So Critobulus is now convinced of *that*. But in the preceding passage, the king takes care of farming, and additional reasons are given so that his subjects are able to pay him tribute. So that is not a disinterested concern with the land, but this is the revenues. Now all these things hitherto

shown here <sup>2</sup>show that the art of farming is necessary, but do they show that it is noble? Choiceworthy for its own sake? . . . That has not yet been established, although Critobulus is quite satisfied, ya.

**Reader:**

“Yet further,” continued Socrates, “in all the districts he resides in and visits he takes care that there are ‘paradises’, as they call them, full of all the good and beautiful things that the soil will produce, and in this he himself spends most of his time, except when the season precludes it.” “Then it is of course necessary, Socrates, to take care that all these paradises in which the king spends his time shall contain a fine stock of trees and all other beautiful things that the soil produces.” (IV.13)

**LS:** Yes, these pleasure gardens, of which we know a bit from Xenophon’s *Anabasis*—but <sup>3</sup>in the *Anabasis*, he speaks of the *animals* as well as the trees in the pleasure gardens. Here he speaks only of the trees, and that is a point which we must keep in mind. Here in this remark about the pleasure gardens, Socrates seems to . . . the question that the king takes care of farming if not exactly for its sake, at least for his sake; because he for his own pleasure, and not only for the utility he derives, is <sup>4</sup>concerned with his pleasure gardens and to that extent with farming. Yes.

**Reader:** ““And some say, Critobulus, that when the king makes gifts, he first invites those who distinguish themselves in war, because it is useless to have broad acres under tillage unless there are men to defend them; and next to them, those who stock and cultivate the land best, saying that even stout-hearted warriors cannot live without the aid of workers.”” (IV.15)

**LS:** Now this is a very sound observation, that even warriors cannot live without food. But it would show by itself only that the art of farming is necessary, not that it is noble. The only reference to that, which is not sufficient, is the reference to the pleasure garden. Yes.

**Reader:** ““There is a story that Cyrus, lately the most illustrious of princes, once said to the company invited to receive—”” (IV.16)

**LS:** “Lately,” it is not there. That is an addition of the translator. Ya.

**Reader:** ““I myself deserve to receive gifts awarded in both classes; for I am the best at stocking land and the best at protecting the stock.”” (IV.17)

**LS:** Ya. Now this is the famous Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire, and he claimed for himself that he is a master warrior and a master farmer and therefore that he should get all the prizes in the two fields of human endeavor. Yes?

**Reader:** ““Well, if Cyrus said that, Socrates, he took as much pride in cultivating and stocking land as in being a warrior.”” (IV.17)

**LS:** Yes. Now, that is a conditional clause. If he said it, this can also mean, if this word or rumor about Cyrus is true. There was such a note of reliance on rumor and on what people say throughout this chapter. Yes.

**Reader:**

“Yes, and, upon my word—by Zeus—if Cyrus had only lived, it seems that he would have proved an excellent ruler. One of the many proofs that he has given of this is the fact that, when he was on his way to fight his brother for the throne, it is said that not a man deserted from Cyrus to the king, whereas tens of thousands deserted from the king to Cyrus. I think you have one clear proof of a ruler’s excellence, when men obey him willingly and choose to stand by him in moments of danger. Now his friends all fought at his side and fell at his side to a man, fighting round his body, with the one exception of Ariaeus, whose place in the battle was, in point of fact, on the left wing.” (IV.18-19)

**LS:** Now the strange thing here is that here Socrates obviously speaks of another Cyrus, the Cyrus with whom Xenophon made an expedition into Asia, the younger Cyrus, who was not a king, <sup>5</sup>but who wanted to become a king and yet [suffered] a misfortune because he was defeated in the battle of Cunaxa. Some people think that Xenophon brought this in because he knew the younger Cyrus, and [that] this is altogether Xenophon speaking here and not Socrates. But I think you must assume that Xenophon was not a complete fool and that this statement must make sense in the mouth of Socrates too. Now, I believe that one can see a reason why Socrates switches from the older Cyrus to the younger Cyrus. Of the older Cyrus, one knows only through reports from the past. The younger Cyrus is a contemporary, and therefore the reports about him are more reliable, at least more easily checked, than those on the older Cyrus. And one would have to compare this passage with what Xenophon says about the battle of Cunaxa, and one would see that Socrates here embellishes the situation of the younger Cyrus a bit beyond what is the truth according to Xenophon in the *Anabasis*. Yes.

**Reader:** “Further, the story goes that when Lysander came to him bringing the gifts from the allies, this Cyrus showed him various marks of friendliness, as Lysander himself related once to a stranger at Megara, adding besides that Cyrus personally showed him around his paradise at Sardis.” (IV.20)

**LS:** Yes, now this is a story, now told, and there will be another story of this kind later on. Here the teller of the story is Lysander, the Spartan general who won the Peloponnesian War for Sparta. And one can perhaps understand this as follows: the praise of Cyrus, of the two Cyruses, is the praise of barbarians. Why could barbarians be models for Greeks? They must have a Greek authority to make them authorities. And the greatest Greek authority of that time was Lysander, *the* victor in *the* war. That he was a Spartan is from this point of view irrelevant. And Socrates did not hear this story from Lysander himself, as we see, but from a guest friend in Megara. Now, he has not even heard it from the guest friend in Megara, but more from some intermediary. Now let us first read the story.

**Reader:** “Now Lysander admired the beauty of the trees in it, the accuracy of the spacing, the straightness of the rows, the regularity of the angles and the multitude of the sweet scents that

clung round them as they walked; and for wonder of these things, he cried, ‘Cyrus, I really do admire all these lovely things—’” (IV.21)

**LS:** And *epi tōi kallei*, “for the beauty.” Beauty and nobility are the same word, and the beautiful and noble things are mentioned throughout this passage. Here we come to the truth, to the truth of the nobility of the art of farming as distinguished from its mere necessity. Yes.

**Reader:** “‘But I am far more impressed with your agent’s skill in measuring and arranging everything so exactly.’ Cyrus—” (IV.21)

**LS:** “Agent” is a slight addition. The skill of him who did it, and Lysander probably knew who did it, as will appear.

**Reader:**

“Cyrus was delighted to hear this and said: ‘Well, Lysander, the whole of the measurement and arrangement is my own work, and I did some of the planting myself.’ ‘What, Cyrus?’,’ exclaimed Lysander, looking at him, and marking the beauty and perfume of his robes, and the splendor of the necklaces and bangles and other jewels that he was wearing; ‘did you really plant part of this with your own hands?’ ‘Does that surprise you, Lysander?’ asked Cyrus in reply. ‘I swear by the Sun-god that I have never yet sat down to dinner when in sound health, without first working hard at some task of war or agriculture, or exerting myself somehow.’” (IV.22-24)

**LS:** Ya, so surely the younger Cyrus, there’s no question: he did take care of the trees, and therefore he was a farmer; and there is a nobility to the art of farming beyond anything we have heard here before. Yes.

**Reader:** “Lysander himself declared, I should add, that on hearing this, he congratulated him in these words: ‘I think you deserve your happiness, Cyrus, for you earn it by your virtues.’”

**LS:** And literally: you seem to me happy justly. In other words, there can also be a man be happy unjustly. Now happy, of course—*eudaimōn*—has a great variety of meanings. It can simply mean wealthy, and if one wants to blunt the edge of the passage, one can translate it by “you seem to me justly wealthy,” but I think it has a somewhat broader meaning. Now Lysander was a Spartan. According to Xenophon, in Sparta the legislator had forbidden the exercise of farming and the arts to the full citizens. They should devote themselves entirely to the city and to war. And therefore if Lysander is convinced, persuaded, by Cyrus that farming is an activity befitting even a king, it should surely befit the citizens of the polis. In other words, if this is so, Lysander is an implicit critic of Sparta whether he was aware of it [or not]. This one thing took place in Sardis, in Asia Minor, and here a man was praised happy by a Greek. There is a well-known story of another Greek who praised an Asiatic man happy in Sardis. That is Croesus, Croesus, the King of Lydia, praised happy not by a Spartan but by Solon—or rather, more precisely, Solon refused to call Croesus happy because no one can be praised happy before his death. Who was wiser, Solon or Lysander? That is a question which we must raise. We get the material from Xenophon but not the explicit answer. So Lysander is an authority from the point of view of reputation or image, but in the deeper the sense of the word he is not one. And so apart from the

qualifications of the praise of farming in this chapter, the case for farming is not yet sufficiently established, and therefore—

[break in tape]

—for those, another chapter, chapter five, in which the case for farming is continued. Shall we have a discussion of this place or finish the chapters on farming? If anyone has any desire in this respect, he should just raise his hand. Okay, then we go on.

**Reader:** “‘Now I tell you this,’ continued Socrates, ‘because—’” (V.1)

**LS:** Ya. No, one second. Here the emphasis is on I. This “I tell”: that means the reason Socrates tells the Lysander story is not necessarily identical with the reason why Lysander tells it, tells the story to the man in Megara. Ya?

**Reader:** “‘because even the wealthiest cannot hold aloof from husbandry. For the pursuit of it is in some sense a luxury as well as a means of increasing one’s estate and of training the body in all that a free man should be able to do.’” (V.1)

**LS:** Now let us see. I mean, that it is an increase of the household we take for granted; that is on the basis of what we have learned before. Increase of the household is the central thing here of the three points which he mentioned. The first point, increasing, but it is flanked here by two considerations different from increase of the household. The first is the pleasurable character of farming, and the second is the training of the bodies to enable one to do the things which become a free man. Here we see a new point of view. Previously we had spoken of Persia, where there are no free men except the king. All others are slaves. And here he turns to free men, to Greeks, to citizens of the Greek cities, and therefore—the point there is—in the Persian chapter, as we call it, he had made a distinction between the soldiers and the farmers. What he is contending in this chapter is that the farmers and the soldiers coincide. In other words, in Persia there is a mercenary army, and here in Greece it is a citizen army. And the case for the citizen army is made here in this chapter. Yes.

**Reader:**

“For, in the first place, the earth yields to cultivators the food by which men live; she yields besides, the luxuries they enjoy. Secondly, she supplies all the things with which they decorate altars and statues and themselves, along with most pleasant sights and scents. Thirdly, she produces or feeds the ingredients of many delicate dishes; for the art of breeding stock is closely linked with husbandry; so that men have victims for propitiating the gods with sacrifice and cattle for their own use. And though she supplies good things in abundance, she suffers them not to be won without toil, but accustoms men to endure winter’s cold and summer’s heat. She gives increased strength through exercise to the men who labor with their own hands, and hardens the overseers of the work by rousing them early and forcing them to move about briskly.” (V.2-4)

**LS:** Ya, the overseer, that means masters, in fact, the owners of larger estates, the smart investors and not rather the smaller peasants . . . Yes.

**Reader:** ““For on a farm no less than in a town, the most important operations have their fixed times.”” (V.4)

**LS:** You see he gives here a number of reasons <sup>6</sup>in favor of farming; and there are altogether five, which you would find out by counting. And this is the center. Farming makes possible sacrifice, proper sacrifice, and it makes possible endurance. Endurance, and this is related to the civic duties, soldierly duties for the farmers . . . .

**Reader:**

“Again, if a man wants to serve in the cavalry, farming is his most efficient partner in furnishing keep for his horse; if on foot, it makes his body brisk. And the land helps in some measure to arouse a liking for the toil of hunting, since it affords facilities for keeping hounds and at the same time supplies food for the wild game that preys on the land. And if husbandry benefits horses and hounds, they benefit the farm no less, the horses by carrying the overseer early to the scene of his duties, and enabling him to leave it late, the hounds by keeping the wild animals from injuring crops and sheep, and by helping to give safety to solitude. The land also stimulates armed protection of the country on the part of the husbandmen, by nourishing her crops in the open for the strongest to take.” (V.5-7)

**LS:** You must keep this in mind, that the earth here brings out the crops in the open, in the middle, for the strongest to take. Yes.

**Reader:**

“And what art produces better runners, throwers, and jumpers than husbandry? What art rewards the laborer more generously? What art welcomes her follower more gladly, inviting him to come and take whatever he wants? What art entertains strangers more generously? Where is there greater facility for passing the winter comforted by generous fire and warm baths, than on a farm? Where is it pleasanter to spend the summer enjoying the cool waters and breezes and shades, than in the country? What other art yields more seemly first-fruits for the gods, or gives occasion for more crowded festivals? What art is dearer to servants, or pleasanter to a wife, or more delightful to children, or more agreeable to friends? To me indeed—” (V.8-11)

**LS:** That is—I mean, we don’t have to learn rhetoric, which is meant seriously, no doubt. But <sup>7</sup>it enhances the power of the argument, that it is stated in this manner. Yes.

**Reader:** ““To me indeed it seems strange, if any free man has come by a possession pleasanter than this, or has found out an occupation pleasanter than this or more useful for winning a livelihood.”” (V.11)

**LS:** You note again the pleasure which was mentioned before and throughout. <sup>8</sup>To repeat, the pleasurable-ness is added to the lucrateness. Obviously, <sup>9</sup>a pursuit can be lucrative without being pleasant, and vice-versa. But this is strikingly different from the Persian chapter, in which <sup>10</sup>nothing was said about the pleasure of farming but only of its grandeur because of its connection with king of Asia.

**Reader:** ““Yet again, the earth willingly teaches righteousness to those who can learn; for the better she is served, the more good things she gives in return.”” (V.12)

**LS:** So the earth is a teacher of justice. This is not so simple. You may remember the previous remark in this chapter, that the earth produces its foods for the strongest to take, which means the kind of encouragement of the right of the stronger, of injustice. This is a difficulty which we must keep in mind. Free men here—we had spoken of this before. In Persia, there are no free men because the soldiers are mercenaries. Professional soldiers may be superior to the citizen soldiers, and that’s an important consideration. But this superiority, if acted upon, is destructive of freedom, so one must make one’s choice.

**Reader:** ““And if haply those who are occupied in farming, and are receiving a rigorous and manly teaching, are forced at any time to quit their lands by great armies, they, as men well-found in mind and in body, can enter the country of those who hinder them, and take sufficient for their support. Often in time of war it is safer to go armed in search of food than to gather it with farming implements.”” (V.13)

**LS:** You see, yes—in other words, you can avoid the hardships of farming, at least to some extent, by simply taking away bananas from those who have cultivated the land. But he had spoken before of justice and that was the first. But there was no reference to justice in the Persian chapter, nor were there any references to the gods in the Persian chapter. This goes together: Freedom, laws, justice, and piety. And?

**Reader:**

“Moreover, husbandry helps to train men for corporate effort. For men are essential to an expedition against an enemy, and the cultivation of the soil demands the aid of men. Therefore nobody can be a good farmer unless he makes his laborers both eager and obedient; and the captain who leads men against an enemy must contrive to secure the same results by rewarding those who act as brave men should act and punishing the disobedient. And it is no less necessary for a farmer to encourage his laborers often, than for a general to encourage his men. And slaves need the stimulus of good hopes no less, nay, even more than free men to make them steadfast. It has been nobly said that husbandry is the mother and nurse of the other arts. For when husbandry flourishes, all the other arts are in good fettle; but whenever the land is compelled to lie waste, the other arts of landmen and mariners alike well-nigh perish.” (V.14-17)

**LS:** And this is the end of this statement, this praise of farming and this argument in favor of farming. There is a kinship between farming and war, that the leadership which the owner of the estate provides has something in common with the leadership of a military man. And the military monarch is a hero, that could easily be observed by the estate owners, where core . . . . So that is now settled, what Critobulus has to do in order to make money in a noble manner, yes, to become a farmer. There is only one difficulty which remains and which is discussed in the rest of this chapter.

**Reader:**

“Well, Socrates,” replied Critobulus to this, “I think you are right so far. But in husbandry a man can rely very little on forecast. For hailstorms and frosts sometimes, and droughts and rains and



blight ruin schemes well planned and well carried out; and sometimes well-bred stock is miserably destroyed by outbreak of disease.”

“Well,” said Socrates in reply, “I thought—” (V.18-19)

**LS:** You must observe that he said in the beginning of the previous remark, “after Critobulus had *heard* this, he said,” meaning here this *long* speech which Socrates made in praise of farming. And now this is after Socrates had heard this, when this objection was raised by Critobulus, and this implies here [that] if Socrates had not heard this, let’s say if Critobulus had not made his objection, Socrates might not have said it.

**Reader:** ““I thought you knew, Critobulus, that the operations of husbandry no less than those of war are in the hands of the gods. And you observe, I supposed, that men engaged in war try to propitiate the gods before taking action; and with sacrifices and omens seek to know what they ought to do and what they ought not to do; and for the business of husbandry do you think it is less necessary to ask the blessing of the gods? Know of a surety that right-minded men offer prayer for fruits and crops and cattle and horses and sheep, aye and for all that they possess.”” (V.19-20)

**LS:** Yes, so this is a further and very important similarity between the art of war and the art of farming. It has been said, I believe in the Second World War, there are no atheists in fox-holes, and we can add that there are no atheists even among farmers, for different reasons—but ultimately for the same reasons: they are in need of divine help. Now let us then see whether there is anything we should, we should think of.

**Student:** . . . .

**LS:** Yes, but here in this fifth chapter nothing is said about the nobility of the art of farming, but of its usefulness and of its pleasant character. Of course one can say that the noble character is implied, because if it is true that farmers are the best soldiers, best defenders of their fatherlands, then this reflects on the art of farming. But it is not made explicit. I think the word “noble” does not occur in this chapter, whereas it occurs in the previous chapter.

**Mr. Williamson:** Can I ask a question related to that? I believe it’s chapter three, Socrates lists three arts, six arts, that are connected with the economic art, among them farming and horse-training or horse-raising. And when Critobulus asks for the noblest of the arts, I would have thought horse-raising would have been mentioned over and above farming. In fact, Socrates seems to suggest that the horse-trainer receives not only wealth, but glory as well from his enterprise.

**LS:** Yes, but why? Because he will fight as a cavalry man. And the other thing is, if he lives from his—if he gains reputation from his stable, that is a somewhat doubtful distinction, as we can see from what happened to Alcibiades, who was very successful at this . . . and that was held against him because it showed that he was a frivolous man. That is what . . . in the debate about the Sicilian expedition. Sure, yes, the knights were of course the upper people in the upper class, who had more wealth to go out as a knight than as a hoplite. But in a democracy, there is the

other side too, you know: that these, the nerve of the fighting men, they're the infantry, and that had very much to do with the democracy.

**Mr. Williamson:** But doesn't that have something to do with Critobulus' question, because he asks both what is the noblest of the sciences and the one most appropriate for profit for me.

**LS:** At the beginning of chapter four?

**Mr. Williamson:** Yes, chapter—I beg your pardon, it's chapter, yes, chapter four, at paragraph one.

**LS:** Ya, if this had been settled by the remark on horsemanship in chapter three, the question would not make sense, would it? Just as what is the status of farming, whether it was the noblest of the arts was not clear, was not made clear by the discussion of farming in chapter three. Chapter three did not have the function of selecting the art Critobulus should choose, but rather an enumeration of the parts of the economic art, and one of them is horsemanship, and the other was farming. . . . just as the management of the wife is also one. In the case of poorer men, of course that would not be horsemanship mentioned, but that had only to do with the fact that wealth is distinguished from non-wealth and not with nobility. Now, as for the question of pleasure, I think that one can see if one makes simply a statistic of the terms used in these two chapters, that in chapter four, the emphasis is on the noble, and in chapter five, the emphasis is on the pleasant. Now the noble, what is noble depends to a considerable extent on what people say, on reputation, on *doxa*. But in the case of pleasure, this is irrelevant—I mean, except for fools. For example, if you like a certain food, that does not depend on the reputation of the food, on what people say about it. No one need to know whether you enjoy that food or not, and it is enjoyable to you. I believe this is an important difference between these two considerations, the noble and the pleasant. Ya?

**Student:** I am very unclear about the meaning of the first sentence in chapter 12, where it said that the earth willingly teaches righteousness—

**Strauss:** Paragraph 12—

**Student:** or justice, right, paragraph 12 excuse me, to those who can learn. The argument seems more poetic than true, to me at least.

**LS:** Why is that not true?

**Student:** Well, I—it's not convincing.

**LS:** But what happens to people who do not make a serious effort in farming? What happens when they neglect farming, farming implements, and so forth?

**Student:** Well, they fail in the endeavor.

**LS:** Yes. But here, no deception is possible. Whether your estate flourishes or does the opposite is for everyone else to see, but in other pursuits, it is perfectly possible to conceal one's . . . .

**Student:** But is a good farmer necessarily a just man?

**LS:** At least to the extent that he does an honest day's work, to that extent. He may be unjust in other respects.

**Student:** And it will teach you justice?

**LS:** To that extent, the earth tells him: If you are good to me, I will be good to you; and whether he draws a conclusion that this would apply also to his relations with human beings, that is an open question.

**Student:** But what is justice? . . . .

**LS:** But here he adds that, he provides for that. He says those who are able to learn, the people—the other ones are not able to learn, who simply say that they will have to work hard to get a good harvest, and that's—otherwise I can cheat my neighbors. They do not learn the lesson properly. But later on it will be made clear in greater detail . . . that the art of farming is the most moral of all arts—that is, according to this work.

**Student:** Perhaps I'm asking, though, what is the definition of justice that is implied here? It seems something like learning justice through friendship, or something.

**LS:** But this made clear what he understands by justice: conferring benefits, or receiving benefits and returning these benefits. That is just. It is not the whole of justice, perhaps, but is it not part, so that ingratitude is glaring injustice?

**Student:** Then wouldn't the sentence be truer, it would be the earth willingly teaches part of justice? Perhaps I'm not catching your point.

**LS:** Ya, but why should one always be so pedantic? [Laughter] Don't you see also that if someone can teach mathematics without implying that he teaches the whole of mathematics? Yes.

**Student:** I don't understand what you said about mercenary soldiers not being free men.

**LS:** They are subject to the king, and they have to obey orders. They get their pay but they have nothing to say, in that they cannot make demonstrations and confrontations and anything of this kind.

**Student:** But I thought that you said that soldiers who weren't paid weren't considered as . . . .

**LS:** I mean the citizen-farmers, whether they were paid or not it doesn't matter. But they are free men, they are not mercenary soldiers. <sup>11</sup>They are soldiers only in case of war, apart from the

period of initial training. They are citizens. In peacetime they are farmers and whatever else they are<sup>12</sup>—the most important point in this connection [is that] there is a separation of the farming population and the soldier population in Persia; there is an identity of this kind of population in the Greek cities. And it is here not decided which solution is preferable, but the differences are made quite clear by the silence on freedom and on justice in the Persian chapter.

**Student:** . . . Have you reconciled the contradiction of who is going to be the stronger at teaching justice . . . .

**LS:** No. Or do I behave eristically—

**Student:** . . . .

**Different Student:** Yes!

**LS:** I see, so that means if someone is asked a question, he must answer all possible questions [laughter] regarding the subject, which is a hard . . . . But the question, surely you must think about this: that the earth is not so unambiguously a teacher of justice, as appears from paragraph 12. We also consider paragraph 7.

**Student:** Is the notion of justice that the earth teaches, is it one that has been harmonized by the teachers' statements . . . . In other words, is there not an implicit argument that there is something just about the right of the stronger?

**LS:** The implicit argument may be, because one could of course say that if people do not take care of their defense, then that's their fault and they will be punished for that in the course of events. And to that extent, the earth, by assenting of course to the strongest, teaches them to try to be as strong as they can; and that is, there is a certain justice that the strongest should inherit the earth, contrary to the New Testament. That's at least what Xenophon has—and not only Xenophon—has said. What does the praise of the warlike virtues mean? Is it limited only to defensive wars? But even in defensive war, the question arises: What do you defend? You know? What do you defend? The main situation may be strictly defensive, but what you defend may have been acquired originally by what they call aggression, so this leads to quite a few difficulties. But you find very frequently in Xenophon the view that virtue consists in helping one's friends, which means among other things one's fellow citizens, and harming one's enemies. And now, if this is a part of justice, then would the earth not teach us this also by what is said in paragraph seven, by inducing men to be vigilant and strong? So then we go on to chapter six.

**Reader:** “Well, Socrates, I think you are right when you bid me to try to begin every undertaking with the gods' help—” (VI.1)

**LS:** Yes, you see Critobulus enlarges Socrates' thesis. He says <sup>13</sup>this applies not only to war and farming, but to every—

[end of tape]

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- <sup>1</sup> Deleted “because”
  - <sup>2</sup> Deleted “we said”
  - <sup>3</sup> Deleted “he also here”
  - <sup>4</sup> Deleted “he”
  - <sup>5</sup> Deleted “who was, who”
  - <sup>6</sup> Deleted “why”
  - <sup>7</sup> Deleted “it is”
  - <sup>8</sup> Deleted “this is”
  - <sup>9</sup> Deleted “something can be”
  - <sup>10</sup> Deleted “there was nothing”
  - <sup>11</sup> Deleted “they go to”
  - <sup>12</sup> Deleted “and there is no”
  - <sup>13</sup> Deleted “not only”

**There is no extant recording of session 4.**

## Session 5: no date

**Leo Strauss:** I try again. Can you hear me? I referred last time to a certain resemblance of Xenophon and Jane Austen. I would like to remind you of one passage in Jane Austen particularly, in *Mansfield Park*, chapter 48, beginning. “Let other pens dwell on guilt and misery. I quit such odious subjects as soon as I can, impatient to restore everybody, not greatly in fault themselves, to tolerable comfort, and to have done with all the rest.” Now, and I read to you a passage in Xenophon which is, to say the least, not incompatible with what Miss Austen says. At the end of the Fifth Book of the *Anabasis*, at the end of the speech which Xenophon claims to have delivered to the soldiers he says: “but it is noble and just and pious and more pleasant to remember the good things rather than the bad ones.” There is a single comparative here, “more pleasant,” and Xenophon doesn’t deny that it is pleasant to remember past bad things, because then they are over and we enjoy remembering. But the main point is that it is noble and just and pious to remember the good things rather than the bad ones. You may know an outstanding example in the *Anabasis*, the story of Meno, who betrayed the Greeks to the Persian king. And he of all people was tortured to death by the Persian king whom he had benefited on account of his terrible betrayal. Now that would of course be beautiful if this were so, if traitors were punished by the very people whom they benefit. And Xenophon, therefore, when he makes his reports about Meno’s fate says: This is said to have been; so we do not know whether the Persian king was such a noble man. Now we finished last time our reading of the *Gynaikologia*, consisting of four chapters. Let us re-read only the end because I was told there was a breakdown of communication toward the end of the lecture.

**Mr. Flaumenhaft:** . . . .

**Student:** . . . .

**LS:** Well, whom do I know and who is young enough to be appointed [reader]. Mr. . . . , will you take the risk?

**Student:** I’ll take the risk.

**LS:** Read again chapter 10, paragraph 13, end. “Now,” he said to Socrates.

**Reader:** Oh. ““And now, Socrates, you may be sure, my wife’s dress and appearance are in accord with my instructions and with my present description.”” (X.13)

**LS:** Yes. And now this is—Ischomachus had a success that he regarded as lasting, “even now.” In the beginning of the next chapter, <sup>1</sup>Socrates puts an end to the account of the wife for the present. The account of the wife, the *Gynaikologia*, is incomplete as is indicated by the reference to Aspasia in the conversation with Critobulus. But the *Gynaikologia* is incomplete also for another reason because some time must have elapsed between Ischomachus’ lecturing to his wife and his conversation with Socrates, and above all Socrates’ conversation with Critobulus. How lasting, we must ask, was the impression made by Ischomachus on his honest young wife? The *Oeconomicus* is of course silent on this, just as the *Oeconomicus* is silent on the effect of

Socrates' advice given to Critobulus. I think you still understood the funny story of the wife of a certain Ischomachus, which I summarized last time at the end of the meeting. If the communication breakdown occurred while I gave that account, I will repeat it. What is the situation?

**Student:** . . . .

**LS:** There was an Ischomachus who was the father-in-law of Callias, so he married the daughter of Callias; and then there was a funny story because Callias began an affair very soon after his marriage with his mother-in-law, and that is this woman whom Ischomachus praises so highly. And that led to a big scandal, and that is a kind of commentary on Ischomachus' art of wife-managing, and <sup>2</sup>one must compare [it] with Socrates' failure in this respect. And I think that the difference is this: that Socrates never believed that he was good at wife-managing, or Socrates knew his ignorance whereas Ischomachus was deceived in this respect. Now what I said about the *Protagoras* is that I think there is an allusion to this state of things in Plato's *Protagoras*, where Callias' house is not unclearly compared to Hades—you know, that Callias would then be Hades, who also lives with mother and daughter, Demeter and Persephone. So do you want to bring up any point regarding the wife's management? Because we turn now to another subject. If not, then if Mr. Hill would be so good to read the next, the first paragraph of chapter eleven.

**Reader:** “At this point I said, ‘Ischomachus, I think your account of your wife’s occupations is sufficient for the present—and very creditable it is to both of you. But now tell me of your own: thus you will have the satisfaction of stating the reasons why you are so highly respected, and I shall be much beholden to you for a complete account of a gentleman’s occupations, and if my understanding serves, for a thorough knowledge of them.’” (XI.1)

**LS:** So Socrates does not say, as Critobulus does in chapter 6, that *he* wishes to become a perfect gentleman. Socrates only wishes *to know* the works of the perfect gentleman and therewith what a perfect gentleman is. And this is the subject for which we have been prepared since chapter 6. This is the central theme of this dialogue: what is a gentleman. And this is treated only in this chapter, chapter 11, but some important additional points will come up in the following chapters. Now let us read the next paragraph.

**Reader:** “‘Well then, Socrates,’ answered Ischomachus, ‘it will be a very great pleasure to me to give you an account of my daily occupations, that you may correct me if you think that there is anything amiss in my conduct.’” (XI.2)

**LS:** You see he is a modest man, and has *sophrosyne*, as the Greeks called it. Yes.

**Reader:** “‘As to that said,’ I, ‘how could I to presume to correct a perfect gentleman, I who am supposed to be a mere chatterer with my head in the air, I who am called—the most senseless of all taunts—a poor beggar.’” (XI.3)

**LS:** Yes, now these characteristics of Socrates, if only of Socrates' reputation, are incompatible with gentlemanship. A gentleman would never be called, thought to be an idle chatterer or measuring the air, or be poor. Socrates acquired this reputation at least partly through



Aristophanes and other comic poets. And he will defend himself in the sequel only against the third reproach, the reproach of being a poor man, a beggar. Yes.

**Reader:**

“I do assure you, Ischomachus, this last imputation would have driven me to despair were it not that a day or two ago I came upon the horse of Nicias the foreigner. I saw a crowd walking behind the creature and staring, and heard them talking volubly about him. Well, I went up to the groom and asked him if the horse had many possessions. The man looked at me as if I must be mad to ask such a question, and asked me how a horse could own property. At that I recovered, for his answer showed that it is possible even for a poor horse to be a good one, if nature has given him a good spirit. Assume, therefore, that it is possible for me to be a good man, and give me a complete account of your occupations, that, so far as my understanding allows me, I may endeavor to follow your example from tomorrow morning.” (XI.4-6)

**LS:** Let us stop here. So the groom has said to Socrates that Socrates is not only grossly ignorant if he asks whether a horse can have much money, but not even sane. That’s much worse. If a horse, although penniless, can become good, provided it has a soul by nature good, then Socrates could also become a good man. Socrates assumes, of course, that he has a soul by nature good. That is not explicitly said, but that is assumed. A good man is not the same as, *agathos aner*, is not the same as a *kaloskagathos aner*, a perfect gentleman. Socrates was thus assured by the meeting with this groom. This story is as characteristic of Socrates as the story of Cyrus is of Lysander and the story of the Phoenician boatsman of Ischomachus. They met, both of them, barbarians. Socrates has no such relations. Socrates is as remote from barbarism as possible. On the other hand, Socrates acquires his most important insight into the character of true human virtue by considering the virtue of a *horse*. To the extent to which human virtue is similar to the virtue of a horse, human virtue is natural and no convention enters. It’s not . . . do I make myself understood? I mean, what we ordinarily understand by virtue, or what the Greeks only understood by virtue, was shot through with conventional notions of goodness. Conventions do not play any role in the life of animals—surely not in the life of horses—and therefore the human virtue which is as *natural* as the virtue of a horse is natural, this is a trans-conventional virtue. Let us finish paragraph six.

**Reader:** ““for that’s a good day for entering on a course of virtue.”” (XI.6)

**LS:** Socrates will start tomorrow to imitate Ischomachus. One can almost translate it with, “Mañana.” [Laughter] One is tempted to say that Socrates has this conversation with Ischomachus on the day after he had learned indirectly through Nicias’s groom that he could acquire virtue, although he had no money, and on the day before he began to acquire virtue, just in this epoch-making event in his life. Yes.

**Reader:** ““You’re joking, Socrates,” said Ischomachus, ‘nevertheless I will tell you what principles I try my best to follow consistently in life.’” (XI.7)

**LS:** Ischomachus knows that Socrates is joking, but the joke points to a serious difference between Ischomachus’ virtue and Socrates’ virtue. Despite the profound difference between Ischomachus, this respectable Athenian citizen on the one hand, and Cyrus, the founder of the

Persian empire on the other, they belong together compared with Socrates. As for these two kinds of virtue, you have surely read in one or other of the Platonic dialogues the distinction between genuine virtue and popular or vulgar virtue: that is the same thing that Xenophon has in mind.<sup>3</sup> The distinction has also something to do with Aristotle's distinction between the theoretical and the practical life. The theoretical life needs hardly any equipment, surely here, as Aristotle calls it, that is an issue of poverty as far as virtue is concerned, whereas the practical life, practical virtue, does need equipment, considerable equipment, considerable . . . that is.

**Reader:** “For I seem to realize that, while the gods have made it impossible for men to prosper without knowing and attending to the things they ought to do, to some of the wise and careful they grant prosperity, and to some deny it; and therefore I begin by worshipping the gods and try to conduct myself in such a way that I may have health and strength in answer to my prayers, the respect of my fellow citizens, the affection of my friends, safety with in honour in war, and wealth increased by honest means.” (XI.8)

**LS:** Nobly increased, so increase of wealth, that is of course settled a long time ago, but limited by nobly, which was not mentioned in Socrates' discussion of economics with [Critobulus]<sup>4</sup>.

**Reader:**

“‘What, Ischomachus,’ I asked on hearing that, ‘do you really want to be rich and have much, along with much trouble to take care of it?’

“‘The answer to your question,’ said he, ‘is, Yes, I do indeed. For I would fain honor the gods without counting the costs, Socrates, help friends in need, and look to it that the city lacks no adornment that my means can supply.’

“‘Truly noble aspirations, Ischomachus,’ I cried, ‘and worthy of a man of means, no doubt!’” (XI.10)

**LS:** So in other words, the wealth, the increase of wealth is used for noble ends and therefore that ennobles the increase of wealth itself, an unselfish use of wealth. Yes?

**Reader:**

“‘Seeing that there are many who cannot live without help from others, and many are content if they can get enough for their own needs, surely those who can maintain their own estate and yet have enough left to adorn the city and relieve their friends, may well be thought high and mighty men. However,’ I added, ‘praise of such men is a commonplace among us. Please return to your first statement, Ischomachus, and tell me how you take care of your health and your strength, how you make it possible to come through war with safety and honour. I shall be content to hear about your money-making afterwards.’

“‘Well, Socrates,’ replied Ischomachus, ‘all these things hang together, so far as I can see. For if a man—’” (XI.10-12)

**LS:** So in other words, one cannot simply abstract or disregard the money-making because it is indispensable for these ends. Yes?

**Reader:**

“For if a man has plenty to eat, and works off the effects properly, I take it that he both insures his health and adds to his strength. By training himself in the arts of war he is more qualified to save himself nobly<sup>i</sup> and by due diligence and avoidance of loose habits, he is more likely to increase his estate.’

“‘So far, Ischomachus, I follow you,’ I answered. ‘You mean that by working after meals, by diligence and by training, a man is more apt to obtain the good things of life. And now I should like you to give me details. By what kind of work do you endeavor to keep your health and strength? How do you train yourself in the arts of war? What diligence do you use to have a surplus from which to help friends and strengthen the city?’

“‘Well now Socrates,’ replied Ischomachus, ‘I rise from my bed at an hour when, if I want to call on anyone, I am sure to find him still at home. If I have any business to do in town, I make it an opportunity for getting a walk. If there is nothing pressing to be done in town, my servant leads my horse to the farm, and I make my walk by going to it on foot, with more benefit perhaps, Socrates, than if I took a turn in the arcade. When I reach the farm, I may find planting, clearing, sowing, or harvesting in progress. I superintend all the details of the work, and make any improvement in method that I can suggest. After this, I usually mount my horse and go through exercises, imitating as closely as I can the exercises needed in warfare. I avoid neither slope nor steep incline, ditch nor watercourse, but I use all possible care not to lame my horse when he takes them. After I am finished, the servant gives my horse a roll and leads him home, bringing with him from the farm anything we happen to want in the city. I divide the return home between walking and running. Arrived, I clean myself with a strigil, and then I have luncheon, Socrates, eating just enough to get through the day, neither empty-bellied nor too full.’” (XI.12-18)

**LS:** Ya. Now there is one expression occurring in the description of Ischomachus’ daily life which calls for a comment, namely, when he says that his servant or slave gives the horse a roll and brings it home. Now this is a verse taken from the *Clouds*, bodily. In the *Clouds*, Pheidippides dreams of his saying to the servant, “Give the horse a roll and bring it home.” Pheidippides does this in his dream, let’s say *even* in his dream. Now Ischomachus is Xenophon’s substitute for the Aristophanean Pheidippides, we might say. Now let’s try how this works out. The Aristophanean Socrates corrupted completely a youth who was already half-corrupted by horsemanship, that’s Pheidippides, and who was the son of a hard-working farmer. The Xenophontic Socrates, however, leads Critobulus, a young man who is the son of a gentleman farmer and who is in danger of losing himself in frivolities such as listening to comedies—he leads him back to *farming* or he saves him from corruption; and he does this by teaching him, among other things, the art of farming, which he will do in the following, subsequent chapters. The Aristophanean Socrates is nothing but a teacher. The Xenophontic Socrates is in the first place a pupil, not of idle-talkers, of alien sophists, or students of nature, but of the most perfect gentleman in Athens. The pupil of the Aristophanean Socrates looked down on his farming father. The teacher of Xenophon’s Socrates admires his farming father as you will see later on in chapter 20. The *Oeconomicus*, I suggest, is, in a properly subdued

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<sup>i</sup> In translation: “honourably”

manner, a comical reply to Aristophanes' comical attack on Socrates. More precisely, the *Oeconomicus* describes Socrates' famous turning away from his earlier pursuit of *phusiologia*, which brought him the reputation of being an idle-talker and a man who measures the air, and which left him wholly unaware of what perfect gentlemanship is, towards the study of only the human things and of the things useful to human beings.

Now this profound change took place after the comical attacks on Socrates as appears from the reference to these comical things both here and in Plato's *Apology of Socrates*. In Plato's *Apology*, however, this change is traced to the Delphic God, or to Chaerephon, who went to Delphi to ask the god. And he, Chaerephon, asked the god whether there is anyone wiser than Socrates. That's to say he took it for granted that Socrates is wise. Now all the wisdom which Socrates claims in the *Apology* for himself follows on the oracle. It is post-Delphic, but there must have been a pre-Delphic wisdom, [as]<sup>5</sup> to which we get a glimpse of an answer in the *Phaedo*, on the last day of Socrates' life when he makes some remarks about what he did in his youth. In another way the *Oeconomicus* deals with this question. From here, I believe we understand better why it makes sense to say that the *Oeconomicus* is the Socratic discourse of Xenophon. It is the Xenophonic account of the great epoch-making change in Socrates' life. Ischomachus has now completed his account of his day, which has this in common with Socrates' day, that he is always in the open. But as he made clear, he is always on the farm and not in the marketplace or the *palaestras*, where Socrates spends his days. Yes? Now after having been duly impressed by this perfect gentleman—emphasis on man, *hombre*—Socrates replies with the woman's oath. Ya? Line 19, beginning.

**Reader:** ““By Hera””?<sup>ii</sup>

**LS:** Ya.

**Reader:**

““Ischomachus,’ cried I, ‘I am delighted with your activities. For you have a pack of appliances for securing health and strength, of exercises for war and specifics for getting rich, and you use them all at the same time! That does seem to me admirable! And in fact you afford convincing proofs that your method in pursuing each of these objects is sound. For we see you generally in the enjoyment of health and strength, thanks to the gods, and we know that you are considered one of the best horsemen and wealthiest of citizens.’

““And what comes of these activities, Socrates? Not, as you perhaps expected to hear, that I am generally dubbed a gentleman, but that I am persistently slandered.’

““Ah,’ said I, ‘but I was meaning to ask you, Ischomachus, whether you include in your system, ability to conduct a prosecution and defense, in case you have to appear in the courts?’

““Why, Socrates,’ he answered, ‘do you not see that this is just what I am constantly practicing—showing my traducers that I wronged no man and do all the good I can to many? And do you not think that I practice myself in accusing, by taking careful note of certain persons who are doing wrong to many individuals and to the state, and are doing no good to anyone.’” (XI.19-22)

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<sup>ii</sup> In translation: “Upon my word”

**LS:** This <sup>6</sup>continues a confrontation of Ischomachus and Socrates, as you can see if you look up in the *Memorabilia*, Book Four, chapter eight, paragraph four, where Socrates gives a similar answer to the question, What does he do in order to protect himself against accusation or condemnation? Do you have it? IV.8.4?

**Reader:**

I will repeat what Hermogones, son of Hipponicus, once told me about him. “When Meletus had actually formulated his indictment,” he said, “Socrates taught freely in my presence, but made no reference to the case. I told him he ought to be thinking about his defense. His first remark was, ‘Don’t you think that I have been preparing for it all my life?’ And when I asked him how, he said that he had been constantly occupied in the consideration of right and wrong, and in doing what was right and avoiding what was wrong, which he regarded as the best preparation for a defense. (*Memorabilia* IV.8.4)

**LS:** Yes, this is a parallel of Ischomachus, which we just read here. I point out only the differences. Socrates spent his *life* in considering the just and unjust things. Ischomachus did not spend his life in considering the just and unjust things. This would be idle talk from the point of view of Ischomachus. And whereas a part of this training of Ischomachus consists in *accusing* people, Socrates was not in the habit of accusing others. This is the other striking difference. The latter point is stated more fully in Plato’s *Gorgias*. Now let us finish this chapter.

**Reader:**

“‘But tell me one thing more, Ischomachus,’ I said; ‘do you also practice the art of expounding these matters?’

“‘Why, Socrates,’ he replied, ‘I assiduously practice the art of speaking. For I get one of the servants to act as prosecutor or defendant, and try to confute him; or I praise or blame someone before his friends; or I act as peace-maker between some of my acquaintances by trying to show them that it is to their interest to be friends rather than enemies. I assist at a court-martial and censure a soldier, or take turns in defending a man who is unjustly blamed, or in accusing one who is unjustly honored. We often sit in counsel and speak in support of the course we want to adopt and against the course we want to avoid.’” (XI.23-25)

**LS:** You see, Ischomachus practices all three kinds of the art of rhetoric: forensic, deliberative, and what Aristotle calls epideictic, praising and blaming. That is part of the equipment of a perfect gentleman. Yes?

**Reader:**

“‘I have often been singled out before now, Socrates, and condemned to suffer punishment or pay damages.’

“‘By whom, Ischomachus,’ I asked; I am in the dark about that!’

“‘By my wife,’ was his answer.

“‘And, pray, how do you plead?’ said I.

“‘Pretty well, when it is in my interest to speak the truth. But when lying is called for, Socrates, I can’t make the worse cause appear the better—oh no, not at all.’

“‘Perhaps, Ischomachus,’ I commented, ‘you can’t make the falsehood into the truth!’” (XI.25)

**LS:** Yes, so there is a difference between being able to make the worse cause, the worse argument, the worse *logos*, the better one, and to make the falsehood into truth. Socrates, as Xenophon says in the *Memorabilia*, could do what he liked <sup>7</sup>in speeches, with anyone. This man corrects Ischomachus. The Socrates who conversed with Ischomachus was as much of a rhetorician as the Aristophanean Socrates. Only Xenophon compares Socrates' argument with *his* wife, Xanthippe, in the *Memorabilia* Book 2, chapter three, where Socrates does not argue because of the hopelessness of arguing, and tries to persuade his son to bear his mother's difficult temper as well as he can. To attempt to persuade Xanthippe would have been hopeless. So it is possible, then, to make the weaker *logos* a stronger one in spite of Ischomachus' swearing that this is impossible.

Now this is the end of the chapter on the gentleman, which as you can see is—that's a much shorter account than that of the wife, but the account of the wife had already thrown considerable light on the gentleman. But we need still more, and that we will get in the next chapters. Perhaps we stop here for a while and see whether the main point has been understood, the confrontation between Socratic and Ischomachean virtue. That is, I think, nowhere as clear in Xenophon as in the *Oeconomicus*, although there are many allusions to this question, political virtue, citizen virtue, common vulgar virtue, and genuine virtue.

**Student:** I didn't quite understand what you meant by the nature of the Socratic rhetoric because it was . . . .

**LS:** Yes. Well, if Socrates can make the weaker cause the stronger one, if he can handle every interlocutor in any way he wished, as Xenophon says, then he possesses the art of rhetoric, the art at least of silencing everyone, if not of persuading everyone, to an amazing degree. Then he was a rhetorician of the first order, and this is the point in Aristophanes, Socrates combines the study of nature with rhetoric, so that we have found an allusion to the study of nature, this measuring of the air as it is called, and here it's rhetoric. Mr. Berns?

**Mr. Berns:** Yeah, I'm just curious about that last sentence; perhaps you aren't in that last sentence—perhaps you are not able to make the false true.

**LS:** Yes, what Ischomachus says, what Socrates says, ya. Ya. Socrates says it in a very obliging and polite way. He says perhaps you cannot make the untruth into truth. And Ischomachus had spoken of the false *logos* and the true *logos*, or the weaker *logos* and the stronger *logos*.

**Mr. Berns:** Oh. I mean, wouldn't that really be as much a point of harmony between Socrates and Ischomachus? Isn't that a point of harmony between these men?

**LS:** Did you say harmony?

**Mr. Berns:** Harmony, yes.

**LS:** Why, where's the harmony?

**Mr. Berns:** Yeah, because I suspect that Socrates also was probably not very good in fighting for a cause that he knew was wrong, that even though he had great rhetorical power, most of these dialogues seem to point to the fact that he was not capable of using it for what he knew to be a bad—

**LS:** But let us—that is a complicated question, but let us state it in simple terms.

[break in tape]

—manage everyone, but the question is whether he did this managing for decent purposes, that I do not deny. But the question is whether he could do it, and whether it was possible to make the weaker *logos* the stronger one for decent purposes if you want. Is this not a fair intermediate suggestion? Yes.

**Student:** But in the case of the *Gorgias*, why do you call it the weaker *logos*, if he makes it stronger?

**LS:** That is true. What I tried to show only was that Socrates—here in these cases in the First Book of the *Republic* especially, and the *Gorgias*—Socrates defeats the most famous rhetoricians; and if one studies the arguments, especially [those] used against Thrasymachus, more closely, one sees that Socrates' use is tricky in what he does. And the question is whether—which we don't have to, cannot decide now—is whether there can be a trickiness for decent purposes. We may abhor this notion, but it is not sure that Socrates or Plato abhorred it, or that Xenophon abhorred it. Oh, yes?

**Student:** Could you go back over that section about the relationship between what happens in Aristophanes' play, and what happens in—

**LS:** In Aristophanes' *Clouds*, Socrates corrupts the son of a farmer, who was already half corrupt before he met Socrates, corrupted by horsemanship. But Socrates corrupts him completely. And here, <sup>8</sup>in the *Oeconomicus*, Socrates prevents a farmer's son, Critobulus, from corruption by teaching him the art of farming. Furthermore, in the *Clouds*, Socrates is the teacher. Here in *Oeconomicus*, he is the pupil of the gentleman farmer, Ischomachus. And this is, as it seems to me, Xenophon's reply to Aristophanes' attack. There may have been an ingredient of so-called fact in the story told here, but that is not important. But the important point is the function which it fulfills. Well, if there is no further point that we wish to bring up, then I suggest that we turn to chapter twelve.

**Reader:**

“‘But perhaps I am keeping you, Ischomachus,’ I continued, ‘and you want to get away now.’

“‘Oh no, Socrates,’ he answered; ‘I should not think of going before the market empties.’”

(XII.1)

**LS:** Socrates reminds us, reminds Ischomachus and reminds Critobulus, of the uniqueness of the opportunity which he has. If Ischomachus had not been stood up by the men with whom he had

an appointment, this great event, the conversation with Ischomachus about gentlemanship, would never have taken place. Yes?

**Reader:**

“‘To be sure,’ I continued, ‘you take the utmost care not to forfeit your right to be called a gentleman! For I daresay there are many things claiming your attention now; but, as you have made an appointment with those strangers, you are determined not to break it.’

“‘But I assure you, Socrates, I am not neglecting the matters you refer to, either; for I keep bailiffs on my farms.’

“‘And when you want a bailiff, Ischomachus, do you look out for a man qualified for such a post, and then try to buy him—when you want a builder, I feel sure you inquire for a qualified man and try to get him—or do you train your bailiffs yourself?’

“‘Of course I try to train them myself, Socrates. For the man who has to be capable—’” (XII 2-4)

**LS:** Wait one second. So there—now here begins the account of the stewards, and the next four chapters, three chapters, are devoted to this subject. Now the account of the stewards is an account of Ischomachus’ educating them, just as the account of the wife was an account of how Ischomachus educated his wife. Ischomachus is an *educator*; that he has, in a way, in common with Socrates, but [it is] a different way of education because the *end* at which Socratic virtue aims and end at which Ischomachean virtue aims are so different. Yes?

**Reader:**

“‘For the man has to be capable of taking charge in my absence; so why need he know anything but what I know myself? For if I am fit to management farm, I presume I can teach another man what I know myself.’

“‘Then the first requirement will be that he should be loyal to you—’”

**LS:** That is what Socrates says now. Yes?

**Reader:**

“‘Then the first requirement will be that he should be loyal to you and yours, if he is to represent you in your absence. For if a steward is not loyal, what is the good of any knowledge he may possess?’” (XII.4-5)

**LS:** Ya. But—so this is an inference of Socrates. I would translate the word more literally by good will, and not by loyalty, and that would probably be *pistotes*, so he must have good will by Socrates’ inference. Yes?

**Reader:**

“‘None, of course; but I may tell you, good will<sup>iii</sup> to me and to mine is the first lesson I try to teach.’

“‘And how, in heaven’s name, do you teach your man to have good will<sup>iv</sup> to you and yours?’

“‘By rewarding him, of course, whenever the god bestows some good thing on us in abundance.’

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<sup>iii</sup> In translation: “loyalty”

<sup>iv</sup> In translation: “loyalty”



““You mean, then, that those who enjoy a share of your good things have good will<sup>v</sup> to you and want you to prosper?”

““Yes, Socrates, I find that is the best instrument for producing good will<sup>vi</sup>.”” (XII.5-7)

**LS:** Ya, we know from other passages in Xenophon that Socrates was not so sure that this works so simply because of the well-known phenomenon of ingratitude. A man does a good turn to another, and he is not rewarded with gratitude. So Socrates, despite his measuring the air and his being an idle talker, is in this practical matter less sanguine than Ischomachus, and we have other examples of Ischomachus’ being sanguine before. Yes. Ischomachus could not have been as wealthy or have remained as wealthy as he is if he did not have a corrective to this simplicity in himself, and therefore Socrates has no need to correct him.

**Reader:**

““But now, if he has good will<sup>vii</sup> to you, Ischomachus, will that be enough to make him a competent bailiff? Don’t you see that though all men, practically, wish themselves well, yet there are many who won’t take the trouble to get for themselves the good things that they want to have?”

““Well, when I want to make bailiffs of such men, of course I teach them also to be careful.”” (XII.8-9)

**LS:** Yes, or “diligence” is perhaps more [apt] here. So that is needed in addition to good will.

**Reader:**

““Pray how do you do that? I was under the impression diligence<sup>viii</sup> is a virtue that can’t possibly be taught.”

““True, Socrates, it isn’t possible to teach everyone you come across to be diligent<sup>ix</sup>.”” (XII.10)

**LS:** This claim, that Ischomachus can teach diligence, is still more surprising than his claim that he can teach good will. Diligence is a virtue or at least an ingredient of all virtue. If this is so, it might follow that virtue is not teachable, if diligence is not teachable. That is a question which underlies this argument. Yes?

**Reader:**

““Very well; what sort of men can be taught? Point this out to me, at all events.”

““In the first place, Socrates, you can’t make diligent<sup>x</sup> men of hard drinkers; for drink makes them forget everything they ought to do.”

““Then are drunkards the only men who will never become diligent<sup>xi</sup>, or are there others?”

““Of course there are—sluggards must be included; for you can’t do your own business when you are asleep, nor make others do theirs.”

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<sup>v</sup> In translation: “loyal”

<sup>vi</sup> In translation: “loyalty”

<sup>vii</sup> In translation: “loyal”

<sup>viii</sup> In translation: “carefulness”

<sup>ix</sup> In translation: “careful”

<sup>x</sup> In translation: “careful”

<sup>xi</sup> In translation: “careful”

“Well then, will these make up the total of persons incapable of learning this lesson, or are there yet others besides?”

“I should add that in my opinion a man who falls desperately in love is incapable of giving more attention to anything than he gives to the object of his passion. For it isn’t easy to find hope or occupation more delightful than devotion to the darling! Aye, and when the thing to be done presses, no harder punishment can easily be thought of than the prevention of intercourse with the beloved! Therefore I shrink from attempting to make a manager of that sort of man too.” (XII.11-14)

**LS:** So we can summarize this altogether and say that men have to be continent regarding the pleasures of the body, a favorite theme of Socrates in Xenophon. That came already up in the discussion of the housekeeper. But there are slight differences in when he spoke of the qualifications of the housekeeper and when he speaks here of the qualifications of the bailiff, and that might be quite amusing to follow that up. So we know now that the incontinent are out, that is settled. And Socrates goes on now.

**Reader:** “And what about the men who have a passion for lucre?” (XII.15)

**LS:** Ya. Ya, who are erotically disposed towards lucre.

**Reader:**

“Are they also incapable of being trained to take charge of the work of a farm?”

“Not at all—” (XII.15)

**LS:** Ya. Ya, but with an oath.

**Reader:**

“Not at all, by god<sup>xii</sup>; of course not. In fact, they very easily qualify for the work. It is merely necessary to point out to them that diligence is profitable.’

“And assuming that the others are free from the faults that you condemn and are covetous of gain in a moderate degree—” (XII.15-16)

**LS:** This “moderate” is an addition of Socrates now, because if he is immoderately concerned with gain, he will of course cheat the master. Ya.

**Reader:**

“how do you teach them to be careful with the affairs that you want them to superintend?

“By a very simple plan, Socrates. Whenever I notice that they are careful, I commend them and try to show them honour; but when they appear careless, I try to say and do the sort of thing that will sting them.’

“Turn now, Ischomachus, from the subject of the men in training for the occupation, and tell me about the system: is it possible for anyone to make others careful if he is careless himself?”

“Of course not—” (XII.16-18)

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<sup>xii</sup> “by God” is not in the translation but added by the reader.

**LS:** Ya, that is again a question of Socrates. Socrates raises here more questions than he had done before. Must the educator not be diligent himself? Now diligent means in this particular context diligent regarding the increase of wealth. Now if the educator, say, Socrates, is not diligent regarding increasing his wealth, how can he convey this diligence to poor Critobulus? But the whole *Oeconomicus* is based on the assumption that the teaching of a diligent farmer can be successfully transmitted by Socrates, a non-farmer, to a potential farmer. Can the diligence be transmitted from Ischomachus to Critobulus? That is a question which we must keep in mind. Yes?

**Reader:**

“Of course not: an unmusical person could as soon teach music. For it is hard to learn to do a thing well when the teacher prompts you badly; and when a master prompts a servant to be careless, it is difficult for the man to become a good servant. To put it shortly, I don’t think I have discovered a bad master with good servants: I have, however, come across a good master with bad servants—but they suffered for it! If you want to make men fit to take charge, you must supervise their work and examine it, and be ready to reward work well carried through, and not shrink from punishing carelessness as it deserves. I like the answer that is attributed to the Persian. The king, you know, had happened on a good horse, and wanted to fatten him as speedily as possible. So he asked one who was reputed clever with horses what is the quickest way of fattening a horse. “The master’s eye,” replied the man. I think we may apply the answer generally, Socrates, and say that the master’s eye in the main does the good and worthy work.” (XII.18-20)

**LS:** So the king, the Persian king, comes here in again as he came in on a former occasion. He is our despotic power, the master is despotic—teaching not accompanied by despotic power, by coercion, is insufficient it seems for the education of stewards. The eye of the master is the key. Of course it means here the eye of the mortal master. This chapter here, as I may mention in passing, has the greatest density of oaths of all of the chapters of the *Oeconomicus*. But it is silent on piety as an ingredient of the education of stewards; and also in the two subsequent chapters which also deal with stewards or servants or whatever, silence on piety. Why? Because the master’s eye must here suffice. That is a thought which Machiavelli expressed, perhaps most clearly of all people, in the *Discourses* when he said you have to, religion is indispensable as a social bond for *free* societies, for republics, but under an absolute monarch the monarchical power will supply the defect of religion. Now this was the first. So good will and diligence are the first two items. Now let’s go on.

**Reader:**

“When you have impressed on a man,” I resumed, ‘the necessity of careful attention to the duties you assign to him, will he then be competent to act as bailiff, or must he learn something besides, if he is to be efficient?’  
 “Of course,” answered Ischomachus, ‘by god<sup>xiii</sup>, he has still to understand what he has to do, and when and how to do it. Otherwise how could a bailiff be of more use than a

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<sup>xiii</sup> “by god” is not in the translation but is added by the reader

doctor who takes care to visit a patient early and late, but has no notion of the right way to treat his illness?

“Well, suppose he has learned how farm work is to be done, will he want something more yet, or will your man now be a perfect bailiff?”

“I think he must learn to rule the labourers.” (XIII.1-3)

**LS:** Yes, that is the field hands. Now that is the theme of this chapter. In the former chapter, we repeat, goodwill and diligence. That means also diligence is not enough, there must be also good will. The steward <sup>9</sup>may have only good will toward himself. Now we have this more important point, it seems, that the steward must be able to rule the field hands. He must have the skill of ruling. That is developed in this next point. Next paragraph.

**Reader:** ““And do you train your bailiffs to be competent to rule too?”

“Yes, I try, anyhow.”

“And pray tell me how you train them to be rulers of men?”

“By a childishly easy method, Socrates. I daresay you’ll laugh if I tell you.” (XIII.4)

**LS:** So Socrates should be more astonished by this claim of Ischomachus that he can teach men to be rulers of men than by the previous claim. And yet the astonishment is unfounded, Ischomachus says it is extremely simple. Now why is it simple?

**Reader:**

“Oh, but it is certainly not a laughing matter, Ischomachus. For anyone who can make men fit to rule others can also teach them to be masters of others; and if he can make them fit to be masters, he can make them fit to be kings. So anyone who can do that seems to me to deserve high praise rather than laughter.”

**LS:** Yes?

**Reader:**

“Well now, Socrates, other creatures learn obedience in two ways—by being punished when they try to disobey, and by being rewarded when they are eager to serve you. Colts, for example, learn to obey the horsebreaker by getting something they like when they are obedient, and suffering inconveniences when they are disobedient, until they carry out the horsebreaker’s intentions. Puppies, again, are much inferior to men in intelligence and power of expression; and yet they learn to run in circles and turn somersaults and do many other tricks in the same way; for when they obey they get something that they want, and when they are careless, they are punished.” (XIII.5-8)

**LS:** So in other words, the procedure is extremely simple: carrots and sticks. But nevertheless, that doesn’t do away with the fact that Ischomachus is able to make men rulers of men, and since there is no essential difference, according to the Xenophontic Socrates, between the rule over field hands and the rule over a city or a nation or an empire, that means he can also produce political or kingly men, and therefore that is a very great art, skill, which Ischomachus possesses.

**Reader:** ““And men can be—””

**LS:** So Socrates knows the high rank of *archikē*, of the skill of ruling, but he does not know of a simple way by which it can be produced. Yes.

**Reader:**

““And men can be made more obedient by word of mouth merely, by being shown that it is good for them to obey. But in dealing with slaves the training thought suitable for wild animals is also very effective of teaching obedience; for you will do much with them by filling their bellies with the food they hanker after. Those of an ambitious disposition are also spurred on by praise, some natures being hungry for praise as others for meat and drink. Now these are precisely the things that I do myself with a view to making men more obedient; but they are not the only lessons I give to those whom I want to appoint my bailiffs. I have other ways of helping them on. For the clothes that I must provide for my work-people and the shoes are not all alike. Some are better than others, some worse, in order that I may reward the better servant with the superior articles, and give the inferior things to the less deserving. For I think it is very disheartening to good servants, Socrates, when they see that they do all the work, and others who are not willing to work hard and run risks when they need be, get the same as they.” (XIII.9-11)

**LS:** Running risks, so they must also have the virtue regarding the dangerous; they must have *andreia*, courage. This is not explicitly claimed by Ischomachus but it is implied. He also teaches *andreia*, manliness. Ya?

**Reader:**

““For my part, then, I don’t choose to put the deserving on a level with the worthless, and when I know that my bailiffs have distributed the best things to the most deserving, I commend them; and if I see that flattery or any other futile service wins special favor, I don’t overlook it, but reprove the bailiff and try to show him, Socrates, that such favoritism is not even in his own interests.” (XIII.12)

**LS:** There is a distinction <sup>10</sup>which we here made in this chapter between two kinds of natures: those loving honors, and those who love only food and so on. This is not altogether irrelevant for the question of the difference between Socratic and Ischomachean virtue, but of course not identical with it. The perfect gentleman and Socrates are beyond the gratification of the belly, that goes without saying; yet in this more common distinction, the deeper difference between Socrates and Ischomachus, as we can call it, is foreshadowed. We have not yet reached the high point of Ischomachus’ claim. Let us read the next chapter . . .

**Reader:**

““Now, Ischomachus,’ said I, ‘when you find your man so competent to rule that he can make them obedient, do you think him a perfect bailiff, or does he want anything else, even with the qualifications you have mentioned?’”

““By God,<sup>xiv</sup> Socrates,’ returned Ischomachus, ‘he must be honest and not touch his master’s property. For if the man who handles the crops dares to make away with them, and doesn’t leave

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<sup>xiv</sup> In translation: “Of course”

enough to give a profit on the undertaking, what good can come of farming under his management?” (XIV.1-2)

**LS:** You see, Ischomachus doesn’t take any chances here. He *proves* that a thieving steward is in truth not a . . . . Yes? And now what does Socrates say to that?

**Reader:** “Then do you take it on yourself to teach this kind of justice too?” (XIV.3)

**LS:** This *kind* of justice, this kind. And it is justice which consists in abstaining from what belongs to others. And there are other kinds, higher kinds, but this he also teaches. Yes.

**Reader:**

“Certainly; I don’t find, however, that all readily pay head to this lesson. Nevertheless I guide the servants into the path of justice with the aid of maxims drawn from the laws of Draco and Solon. For it seems to me that these famous men enacted many of their laws with an eye on this particular kinds of justice. For it is written: ‘thieves shall be fined for their thefts,’ and ‘anyone guilty of attempt shall be imprisoned if taken in the act, and put to death.’” (XIV.3-5)

**LS:** Yes, if, if discovered. Taken in the act <sup>11</sup>is not quite good; it might mean he must really be discovered *in flagrante*. But if he is found out, that is clear—that is, every penal law which would say that a man doing such and such a thing will be punished in such and such a way is untrue, because it would have to add the qualification if he is caught, and that would make the law ridiculous if it would make this addition. Ya?

**Reader:**

“The object of these enactments was clearly to make covetousness unprofitable to the offender. By applying some of these clauses and other enactments found in the Persian king’s code, I try to make my servants upright in the matters that pass through their hands. For while those laws only penalize the wrongdoer, the king’s code not only punishes the guilty, but also benefits the upright. Thus, seeing that the honest grow richer than the dishonest, many despite their love of lucre, are careful to remain free from dishonesty. And if I find any attempting to persist in dishonesty, though they are well treated, I regard them as incorrigibly greedy, and have nothing more to do with them. On the other hand, if I discover that a man is inclined to be honest not only because he gains by his honesty, but also from a desire to earn my approbation—”

**LS:** To be praised.

**Reader:** “to be praised, I treat him like a free man by making him rich; and not only so, but I honor him as a gentleman.” (XIV.5-9)

**LS:** As a perfect gentleman. Now this is quite remarkable. So this, the better kind of stewards, although they are slaves, although they have no property of their own, can be gentlemen—at least they can deserve to be treated as gentleman. So to repeat: one needn’t be wealthy, one needn’t even be a free man, <sup>12</sup>to deserve to be treated as a gentleman. Now there is of course a great difference between the perfect gentlemanship in Ischomachus’ sense and the perfect gentlemanship in Socrates’ sense. Ischomachus, we can say, is silent about any intellectual

qualities required of the perfect gentleman, qualities which he had mentioned when speaking of the housekeeper. So the discussion of the stewards follows immediately on chapter eleven: the confrontation of the two ways of life. The discussion of the stewards continues that confrontation and deepens it because it throws light on the perfect gentleman if the stewards, or the better kind of stewards, can come as close as they are said to come to the perfect gentleman himself. Now the next chapter makes a transition to the art of farming, but this is an incision here. Is there any point you would like to bring up regarding the stewards?

**Student:** I can't understand why the distinction between those who are lovers of honor and those who are lovers of food . . . .

**LS:** The others are just like beasts, according to what Ischomachus said, and they cannot be respected. One may have some affection for them, but they cannot be respected, only those who love praise. Well, we speak rather of self-respect, but there is a connection between self-respect and the respect paid by others, you know?

**Student:** So these people who are only lovers of food can't—

**LS:** I beg your pardon?

**Student:** The people who are simply lovers of food cannot have self-respect, even . . . .

**LS:** Ya, they are below that level where self-respect would come in.

**Student:** He is clearly not ruling out the possibility of people being both lovers of food and lovers of honor.

**LS:** Yes, but the question is: What in case of conflict? What in case of conflict, then what desire gives way? Yes, all men need food, that's undeniable.

**Student:** What importance do you see in the fact that the conversation was not, doesn't take place by plan but only by accident, because of an appointment that isn't kept?

**LS:** A rare chance. It might not have happened, and then everything would have been different. It, yes? [A student begins to ask a question] May I add this? You see, if he wanted something else, if he wanted to say find out from a painter—say, Zeuxis or something—then he could go to his workshop, that is described by Xenophon elsewhere; but here, Ischomachus is never in town and so it depends on accident whether he can ever meet him, and he is *the* perfect gentleman. That is I think the answer to the question.

**Student:** Isn't there a little irony in that that also that just after we found out all these things that Ischomachus supposedly spends his time doing, he's listed all these great activities, and then we found out that actually he spent this moment just idly waiting in the marketplace, and Socrates says: Oh, it's great that you do all these things, I better let you go; and he says: No, that's okay.

**LS:** Yes, but is this not, as he makes clear, only the consequence of his diligence in having trained his bailiffs properly so that he can be away for a day and everything will be done exactly as he wants it to be done? Yes?

**Student:** If I could, there seems to be a contradiction between your answer to Mr. Cutler about the chance encounter of the whole meeting, and you would argue that this was the crucial event that will change Socrates, because there seems to be great necessity for that change. I mean, how do you reconcile the pure chance and the necessity?

**LS:** Well, the premise of the hypothesis of this story is that it was not necessary. I mean, if this is a comical reply (if however subdued) to a comic attack, it will partake up to some extent at least to the character of comedies. Now there is always this ingredient in comedies of even the impossible which happens: here, the improbable, that Ischomachus should be in town. In the only Platonic dialogue <sup>13</sup>where the interlocutor is an active farmer, a gentleman farmer, and that takes place in exactly the same place <sup>14</sup>as the *Oeconomicus*, namely, in the hall, in the cloister of Zeus the Deliverer. I mean, in the *Theages*: the same situation. <sup>15</sup>Theages' father, Demodocus, never comes downtown—no, downstate, I think one should say—except when there is a very rare necessity. Now in this case the conversation is sought by the gentleman farmer, because his son wants to meet Socrates and become a pupil of Socrates, and therefore *he* starts the conversation. And Socrates has quite some difficulty in persuading father and son that this is not a good idea. And one reason he—the first reason which he gives is that he can't accept people if he is not erotically inclined. He is an erotic man. And then they laugh that an old man like him talks about such things. And then Socrates says, as it were: Well, then I give it to you another way; and he speaks of his *daemonion*. And then he tells stories of what happens if one does not obey or follow Socrates' *daemonion*, and that is a very long list of very superstitious stories, so that this dialogue is since the nineteenth century declared to be spurious, because this is unworthy of Socrates to have such a low superstitious view of the *daemonion*. But in this situation, it is perfectly proper, it seems to me, and Theages says no; and Socrates finds out very soon [that] he wants to become very famous, of course—and, in a word, he wants to become a tyrant. And then Socrates finds—seeing the impropriety of this wish both in regard to Socrates and in regard to Theages himself—falls back on these two parallel reasons, erotically and daemonically, which I believe are the same thing. That is, that leaves no argument.

**Student:** I am already confused here because it seems to me the characteristic of Socrates is that he's always available for conversation on the whole, and I am thinking of the *Theages*, I'm thinking just in contrast with Ischomachus you're not, you're not saying that he's trying to learn from Ischomachus this kind of business, you see. Ischomachus is almost never "idle."

**LS:** Yes.

**Student:** And Socrates in some sense is always is idle from that point of view.

**LS:** Yes, sure. Ya, but the other point also in Xenophon, as well as in Plato, is that Socrates does not like to converse with everyone, so that I think that even in the Platonic dialogues one must distinguish between *voluntary* dialogues and *compulsory* dialogues, the latter being dialogues imposed on Socrates by vanity or politeness or duty; whereas, for example, the beginning of the



*Charmides* gives you a beautiful example of a voluntary dialogue. Socrates is rushing there. But the *Euthyphro*, that is imposed on Socrates: he meets him and Socrates cannot get out of it without engaging in this conversation.

**Student:** But Ischomachus' idleness is a different kind of compulsory one, just somebody didn't come to an appointment. We get that the idea that Ischomachus was a man like an American businessman, much too busy to stop and talk to anybody ordinarily.

**LS:** Yes, but for example, an American businessman can also be stranded in the Amazon valley. I have once seen such a film about it, and then there will be plenty of opportunity for talking to him.

**Student:** Yeah, I guess my point is simply that the gentleman, if Ischomachus is a gentleman, I don't want to be one, and I don't think Socrates does.

**LS:** No.

**Student:** Gentlemen are much too busy.

**LS:** Ya, but on the other hand, this aim was much more—the desire to imitate Ischomachus was much more widespread.

**Student:** Much more?

**LS:** Widespread than the desire to imitate Socrates. You know, after all, wealth, honor in the city, and the other things he mentions, these are objectives and liked by many more people than the things which Socrates cherished. Yes?

**Student:** Yes, in the chapter on women, Ischomachus explains how to train his wife, to train her servants in good will, and diligence, and many aspects of justice just as Ischomachus trains his servants and trains his stewards in this chapter. But in the chapter on women, Ischomachus says that unless his wife sees to it that these measures are taken care of in every detail, that she serves as a guardian to the servants, then all of the measures taken are futile. And it seems here that this parallel between them that Ischomachus is in a similar position, where he is training his stewards but he doesn't seem to feel the necessity to be constantly overlooking his stewards.

**LS:** There—well, constant overlooking is impossible, so he will only see from time to time. But then, according to his assertion, he finds out very soon whether a fellow is a sluggard or useless for other reasons, and then he demotes him or sells him or whatever it may be. These are things which he cannot do with his wife.

**Student:** Can we imagine then that his wife possibly having a moment of leisure to engage in such a discussion?

**LS:** Then?

**Student:** Can we imagine that his wife, taking a moment off from her capacity as a guardian and engaging in such a way as Ischomachus is doing now . . .

**LS:** Well, I suppose the female sex was always known as being somewhat more talkative than the male, so I suppose this would go while she supervises the work of the maids—why should she not engage in conversation with the maids, and a neighbor may drop in, and the other possibilities which one can easily visualize? I do not see precisely what difference in the treatment of stewards on the one hand, and the treatment of the wife on the other you have in mind.

**Student:** Yeah, I didn't see that much of a difference either.

**Student:** Do you have any ideas why Ischomachus' wife brought him to trial?

**LS:** Now, well, this is of course a domestic trial—

**Student:** Oh—

**LS:** Which is, yes, yes. No, no. When they have a domestic quarrel, and—

**Student:** I was thinking of . . .

**LS:** And she complains that he has not been fair to her, then he is unable to defeat her dialectically, as he is—quite clear. So <sup>16</sup>his wife has a manly mind, as we have seen, as Socrates summarizes in a fashion. Well, then, I hope next time we can begin the discussion of farming, which is especially interesting, that Socrates should appear as a teacher of this particular *technē*—and not only that, Ischomachus will show him that Socrates knows everything about farming even though he has never farmed in his life. Socrates *remembers* everything about farming as a kind of comic allusion to the doctrine of recollection. He remembers what he has seen farmhands doing while passing by, and that is his source of this knowledge.

[end of tape]

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<sup>1</sup> Deleted "Socrates says"

<sup>2</sup> Deleted "one can"

<sup>3</sup> Deleted "there is also"

<sup>4</sup> Deleted "Ischomachus"

<sup>5</sup> Deleted "and"

<sup>6</sup> Deleted "is a"

<sup>7</sup> Deleted "with"

<sup>8</sup> Deleted "Socrates"

<sup>9</sup> Deleted "may be, may think"

<sup>10</sup> Deleted "we have"

<sup>11</sup> Deleted "would be"

<sup>12</sup> Deleted "to be"

<sup>13</sup> Deleted "with"

<sup>14</sup> Deleted "as where"

<sup>15</sup> Deleted "Theages never"

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<sup>16</sup> Deleted “she has a”

## Session 6: no date

**Leo Strauss:** Can you hear me? Good. We come now to the last section of the *Oeconomicus*, and let us use this occasion for having a look at the plan of the *Oeconomicus* as a whole. That plan is quite lucid: we have first the conversation with Critobulus on the economic art and its parts; then the conversation with Ischomachus, which deals first with the wife, then with the husband, the perfect gentleman himself; then with the bailiff, and finally with the art of farming. But there are quite a few obscurities: for instance, the double treatment of farming in chapters four and five, in the Persian chapter and the non-Persian chapter. And why does the treatment of the wife precede that of the husband? Why is the section on the wife so much more extensive than the section on the husband, given the fact that the perfect gentleman is *the* theme of this whole part of the book? Xenophon does not answer these questions. He is not prolix. It has been said of the classical authors altogether that they are not prolix. That must be understood of the classical authors in contradistinction to the post-classical authors. I give you an example. When Polybius in the Sixth Book of his history comes to speak of the Roman polity—by the way, this is a model of Montesquieu’s chapter on the English constitution which played such a great role in the formative years of this country—now, when Polybius comes to speak of the Roman polity in this particular moment, namely, when he begins to speak of the Second Punic war, he explains why this is the most proper place. One could say the Second Punic war, that was Rome’s finest hour. Now Thucydides in such a situation would not have given an explicit explanation. Xenophon omits quite a few things which we have to add by reflecting. There are also strange repetitions. We will soon find another example. Now, in the so-called higher criticism as it was practiced especially in the nineteenth century, they solved these—at least the difficulty caused by the repetitions—simply by deleting one of them because it is superfluous: Why should the author have done it? That must have been done by some silly scribe. But these critics forget that if Xenophon in one of his writings says in a sentence, which it is true they do not dare to translate literally that “what is written beautifully and in an orderly manner is not written beautifully and in an orderly manner.” This is on the face of it a contradiction, but I think it is susceptible of a rational explanation. At any rate, this sentence cannot be used for the understanding of Xenophon since it is itself deleted because of its apparent absurdity. Now should we turn now to chapter 15, or are there any questions from last time which we should take up first?

**Student:** I have a question that may go back before last time that I’d like to ask. I’m not sure that it should be answered now. It has to do with the division of the labor between the man and the woman. It says that there are certain chores for which the man is more suited, such as working outdoors and gathering, and the woman is more suited for certain things indoors. And I was wondering if it’s perhaps artificial to make a distinction like that, because it seems that there are certain things which are good for humans, and if it’s good to work outdoors, then it would be good for women as well as for men. If there are certain advantages to be gained by a doing a certain kind of work, then it would make the women’s soul greater as well as the man’s. And I was wondering if perhaps this very distinction that Xenophon seems to make between what is proper for a woman to do and what is proper for a man to do might not be the same distinction that society very unfortunately today seems to make and seems to be the cause of a great deal of unfortunate circumstances.

**LS:** Now, if I would tell you that one of the man's works is to supervise the field hands which he cannot do if the estate is of a reasonable size except by riding on horseback all the time, then you could rightly refer me to Barbara Stanwyck among other people who are as good on horseback as any man can be.<sup>i</sup> <sup>1</sup>But still, are there not some—you said society, but that would be called by Xenophon, I believe, the *nomos*, the law, the ordinance, custom of the city. And this custom might be irrational, might be against nature, and then of course one could change it. <sup>2</sup>I suppose you have read Plato's *Republic*, where this is one of the great things: that one should give men and women the same work because there is no difference between them than that the ones, the men, are usually stronger and the women weaker. But does this exhaust the difference? I mean, on one occasion Socrates says that the difference is about as irrelevant as that between bald-headed men and men who are not bald. Now this is not a sufficient description of the difference between the two sexes, thank you. But let us go back to what is truly natural, that man does not bear children. Would you admit that? [Student says "mmhmm"; laughter]. And I think taking care of the children, that is done best in protected areas, protected against the inclemencies of the weather, yes, and that would be the business of the—I mean, men cannot give suck to the babies; that would have to be done at home by the wife. Now this leads to other things, at least to other activities which are properly assigned to the man on the one hand, and to the women on the other. I mean, it could easily happen that in a given case that the man might be much better in the kitchen than the woman and vice-versa. That could be. But whether that is the normal case, the case according to nature, that would be the question. So if you take a situation in which much of the work which had to be done by human beings at that time is done by machines, then of course the picture will look different.

But the basis of everything is [a] natural difference between the man as a male and the woman as a female. And what Xenophon claims [is that] there is harmony, at least Ischomachus claims that. Let us be more cautious: Ischomachus claims that nature has established it, and the *nomos*, what you call society, praises it in agreement with nature. But surely that needs investigation, and this is not a novel thought or a thought which came up in our time, but as is shown by Plato's *Republic*, that question was raised in classical Greece as well, and not only in Plato or Xenophon.

Now is there any other point which you would like to bring up? No, then let us turn to chapter 15, with one introductory remark. Chapter 15 marks the transition from one part of the work to another. Just as chapter six marks the transition from the discussion of the economic art to the discussion of the gentleman and the gentleman's life, here chapter 15 marks the transition from the discussion of gentlemanship to the art of farming. Now let us read the first paragraph, Mr. Flaumenhaft.

**Reader:**

“Well, well, I won't go on to ask whether anything more is wanting to your man, after you have implanted in him a desire for your prosperity and have made him also careful to see that you achieve it, and have obtained for him, besides, the knowledge needful to ensure that every piece of work done shall add to the profits, and, further, have made him capable of ruling, and when, besides all this, he takes as much delight in producing heavy crops for you in due season as you

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<sup>i</sup> Barbara Stanwyck (1907-1990), an Emmy-award winning American actress. In the mid-1960s she appeared in a popular television Western, *The Big Valley*.

would take if you did the work yourself. For it seems to me that a man like that would make a very valuable bailiff.” (XV.1)

**LS:** Ya, let us talk. Now this is a summary of what had been discussed in the three preceding chapters, and a summary is a repetition. But in all repetitions, we must see whether something has been changed, and what has been changed. Now do you see a difference, do you remember the topics of the three preceding chapters? Goodwill, assiduity or care, justice, and being a ruler, being a man fit to rule—these were the items of the three chapters. Now I think one sees at once that justice is missing, has been replaced by something else: by being as pleased as his master at exhibiting a rich harvest on the master’s farm. Could this take the place of justice? Well, justice as discussed in chapter thirteen—one can say is a negative justice that consists in abstaining from what belongs to somebody else, in this case to the master. Here he speaks of the *positive* justice, by which one entirely subordinates one’s own good to the good of somebody else. The bailiff, he lives, and is pleased altogether by his master’s good harvest without thinking of himself, yet there is something difficult with this kind of justice. It makes sense in order to describe the relation of the bailiff or of the slaves altogether to the master, but what about the relation of the master to the bailiff? Is the master to forget his interest entirely in favor of the interests of the bailiffs? Hardly. So that is I think implied in this change from justice to something else which however reminds of justice. Yes?

**Student:** I don’t really see the difference between the last part of the passage and the very first part, the desire for your prosperity, and being careful that you achieve it. How is this very different from that?

**LS:** Ya, well, that is the translation, that he wishes for you the good things, he says, first, and that is the same what was formerly called goodwill, *eunoia*, and the last one is distinguished from that, and in addition to all these things, if he is pleased by—if he takes, derives pleasure from <sup>3</sup>exhibiting such a harvest, that’s something different.

**Student:** Perhaps I just don’t see the difference between the goodwill as a desire on the part of the bailiff and—

**LS:** Well, you can have goodwill without going out of your way. For example, you can wish that this particular team should win a match. You have goodwill toward them, but you do not do anything toward the victory.

**Student:** But in the first part, after the goodwill, doesn’t he say that made him also careful to see that he would achieve it? That’s more than just willing, that’s doing something.

**LS:** Ya, now this is true, this is true; but still, this caring, this assiduity—this is still, on the basis of the previously given explanation, selfishly motivated. The bailiff is rewarded by praise or by more tangible goods if he is assiduous, and punished if he is not. This is more than that.

**Student:** The delight would be the difference? The delight would be the difference?

**LS:** What?

**Student:** The delight that the bailiff feels?

**LS:** Yes, yes yes. Ya, the full identification of himself with the master's interests. Now, go on Mr. Flaumenhaft?

**Reader:**

“Nevertheless, Ischomachus, don't leave a gap in that part of the subject to which we have given the most cursory attention.

“Which is it?” asked Ischomachus.

“You said, you know, that the greatest lesson to learn is how things ought to be done; and added that, if a man is ignorant what to do and how to do it, no good can come of his management.” (XV.2)

**LS:** So this is the point which has not yet been discussed. Xenophon draws already our attention to that by the enumeration given in paragraph one, where he enumerates five items, and knowledge is in the center, and here this comes now, what is in the center comes now to the fore. The knowledge which the bailiff must have is now to be discussed. Yes?

**Reader:**

“Then he said, ‘Socrates, are you insisting now that I should teach the whole art and mystery of agriculture?’” (XV.3)

**LS:** The art itself—why the mystery?—the art itself of farming. The assiduity and the other things of which he had spoken are not arts, but one could raise this difficulty: Is the ability to produce goodwill and so on not an art, since it produces something? Is not the economic art altogether an art? Even: Is not all virtue wisdom or knowledge? Whatever the case may be, the common sense is a distinction between the virtues, and the art makes this remark and tells you it without any difficulty.

**Reader:**

“Yes, said I; ‘for maybe it is just this that makes rich men of those who understand it, and condemns the ignorant to a life of penury, for all their toil.’” (XV.3)

**LS:** Yes. Is Socrates interested in getting rich or is he interested in learning an art? That is not clear from this passage. Yes?

**Reader:**

“Well, Socrates, you shall now hear how kindly a thing is this art.” (XV.4)

**LS:** The word which he translates by “kindly” is in Greek *philanthrōpia*, [from] which philanthropy is derived, and which means simply loving, love of human beings; but this does not have in the classical time any profound meaning. It is almost like there are men who love dogs, others love birds, others love horses, and so there are also human beings who love human beings. But still, human beings like of course things or men who love human beings, and the art of farming is such a thing that is kind to human beings. Yes.

**Reader:**

“‘Helpful, pleasant, honorable, dear to gods and men in the highest degree, it is also in the highest degree easy to learn. Noble qualities surely! As you know, we call those creatures noble that are beautiful, great, and helpful, and yet gentle towards men.’” (XV.4)

**LS:** So the art, the special recommendation of the art of farming is that it is so easy to learn. All these points enumerated here, and in particular the one regarding that it is so easy to learn, had been mentioned by Socrates in the recommendation of farming to Critobulus in chapter five. But one can rightly say [that] Socrates only repeats to Critobulus what he had learned from the source, from Ischomachus here. So the order of the dialogue inverts the temporal order. Yes.

**Reader:**

“‘Ah, but I think, Ischomachus, that I quite understand your account of these matters—I mean how to teach a bailiff; for I think I follow your statement that you make him loyal to you, and careful and capable of ruling and honest.’” (XV.5)

**LS:** “Just,” you could translate. You see here now he gives a literal enumeration of the topics discussed before, but go on.

**Reader:**

“‘But you said that one who is to be successful in the management of a farm must learn what to do and how and when to do it. That is the subject that we have treated, it seems to me, in a rather cursory fashion—’” (XV.6)

**LS:** So Socrates doesn’t seem to have heard what Ischomachus said. He surely doesn’t seem to respond to it. He simply repeats with changes what he had said at the beginning of the chapter. That is one of these enigmatic repetitions <sup>4</sup>which have induced scholars to tamper with the text, but Socrates probably has his reasons for pretending not to have heard it because he wants to <sup>5</sup>draw out Ischomachus more fully. Yes?

**Reader:**

“‘That is the subject that we have treated, it seems to me, in a rather cursory fashion, as if you said that anyone who is to be capable of writing from dictation and reading what is written must know the alphabet. For had I been told that, I should have been told, to be sure, that I must know the alphabet, but I don’t think that piece of information would help me to know it. So to now; I am easily convinced that a man who is to manage a farm successfully must understand farming, but that knowledge doesn’t help me to understand how to farm. Were I to decide this very moment to be a farmer, I think I should be like that doctor who goes around visiting the sick, but has no knowledge of the right way to treat them. Therefore, that I may not be like him, you must teach me the actual operations of farming.’” (XV.6-9)

**LS:** Yes, that’s clear. Socrates doesn’t know how to farm if he right now were to decide to farm. Does he contemplate taking up farming? So he only reinforces his demand that Ischomachus teach the art of farming. But let us see whether there is not some difference in what Ischomachus now replies.



**Reader:**

““Why Socrates, farming is not troublesome to learn, like other arts, which the pupil must study till he is worn out before he can earn his keep by his work. Some things you can understand by watching men at work—” (XV.10)

**LS:** Ya, just by seeing, by looking at. Yes.

**Reader:**

““others by just being told, well enough to teach another if you wish. And I believe that you know a good deal about it yourself without being aware of the fact. The truth is that, whereas other artists conceal more or less the most important points in their own art, the farmer who plants best is most pleased when he is being watched, so is he who sows best. Question him about any piece of work well done: and he will tell you exactly how he did it. So farming, Socrates, more than any other calling, seems to produce a generous disposition in its followers.” (XV.10-12)

**LS:** Character, the Greek word *ēthē*. Yes. Good. So Ischomachus repeats his point: farming is among—he drops the other recommendations and speaks only now how easy it is to learn, and at the same time it has the best influence on the character. In all other arts, the artisans conceal the mysteries of their art for reasons of lucre, of course, but the point is that in their arts one can conceal, but in the art of farming you cannot do it. So the full praise of the art of farming is that it makes the lowest demands on the intellect and the highest demands on character, and Socrates can of course not resist the temptation to learn that art.

**Student:** What did you say, the highest demands on what?

**LS:** On character. On honesty. In other, all other arts, cheating is possible, <sup>6</sup>but here it is not possible. Everything above ground: even if you put the onions into the ground, nevertheless it comes out very clearly.

**Reader:**

““An excellent preamble,’ I cried, ‘and not of a sort to damp the hearer’s curiosity. Come, describe it to me, all the more because it is so simple to learn. For it is no disgrace to you to teach elementary lessons, but far more a disgrace to me not to understand them, especially if they are really useful.’” (XV.13)

**LS:** Yes. So that is a proemium, as Socrates calls it, to the art of farming. And the main point is, the crucial point is, it is very easy to learn and a very salutary influence on the character. Now up to this point, this much is clear: Socrates will not be a farmer, a practicing farmer, a farmer *in deed*. He may very well become an outstanding teacher of farming, a man who teaches farming through and through most precisely *in speech*. But there is a difficulty here because being such a man he is exposed to a grave and even fundamental mistake which Ischomachus hastens to denounce at the beginning of chapter 16.

**Student:** Is there any irony in the thought that farming is easy to learn? I mean in emphasizing that, I would—it seems to me that if I were to ask the theoretical question what is easy to learn, then somehow traditionally the answer to that question should be mathematics. It's very name suggests that it's easy to learn.

**LS:** Ya, well, but not all men. It was also the traditional view that not all men are good in learning mathematics.

**Student:** Yeah, but I think that's an accident by nature.

**LS:** But you have to follow the argument: the point which will be made clear is that Socrates—who has no knowledge of farming, as he claims—has by occasionally passing by farm workers and just looking in a distracted way at what they are doing has learned all the rudiments. And a single conversation with Ischomachus is sufficient to give him all the knowledge required. You cannot acquire all of the mathematical knowledge in one session in town as Socrates acquired. And you will see from the content <sup>7</sup>that you cannot say that Socrates was a particularly intelligent man. No very great intelligence is needed in order to put these things together as they are put together for him with his help by Ischomachus. At any rate, here that is the key recommendation of the art of farming, that it is so easy to, the easiest to learn. This had already been said by Socrates when he talked to Critobulus in chapter six, but as I said before, this is only a reflex of what happens here in the conversation with Ischomachus, which preceded in time the conversation with Critobulus. Ya. Go on.

**Reader:**

“‘First then, Socrates, I want to show you that what is called the most complicated problem in agriculture by the authors who write most accurately on the theory of the subject—’” (XVI.1)

**LS:** “Write” is not there, ya. It says speaking.

**Reader:**

“‘but are not practical farmers, is really a simple matter. For they tell us that to be a successful farmer one must first know the nature of the soil.’” (XVI.1-2)

**LS:** Ya, nature of the earth, of the land; in Greek [it] is the same word. The theoreticians think that the fundamental part of the art of farming is complicated, multi-colored, and we may add therefore as susceptible of being concealed as the other arts. Yes, what does Socrates say?

**Reader:**

“‘Yes, and they are right,’ I remarked; ‘for if you don’t know what the earth<sup>ii</sup> is capable of growing, you can’t know, I suppose, what to plant or what to sow.’ ‘Well then—’” (XVI.2)

**LS:** Yes, so Socrates of course agrees with the theoreticians. He was not a practicing farmer at that time at any rate. And you see it when he speaks the word *physis*, nature, it rings a bell, and he explains this by *dunamis*, what the earth or the land *can* bear. *Physis* is *dunamis*. Yes?

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<sup>ii</sup> In translation: “soil”

**Reader:**

“‘Well then,’ said Ischomachus, ‘you can tell by looking at the crops and trees on another man’s land what the soil can and what it cannot grow. But when you have found out, it is useless to fight against the gods. For you are not likely to get a better yield from the land by sowing and planting what you want instead of the crops and trees that the land prefers.’” (XVI.3-4)

**LS:** Ya. No, wait a moment. There is no—by what Ischomachus says here, you then don’t have to look at your land; it is perfectly sufficient to look at somebody else’s land. I suppose he means at the neighbor’s land. There is no natural difference between the land which you own as such and the land of somebody else. There is an emancipation from one’s own, just as we had seen in a much broader context at the beginning of the *Oeconomicus*. But by looking at the crops and the trees on another man’s land, one sees indeed what the man can produce, but one does not see what it cannot produce. Is there no innovation, no improvement possible in these matters? Yes.

**Reader:**

“‘If it happens that the land does not declare its own capabilities because the owners are lazy, you can often gather more correct information from a neighboring plot than from a neighboring proprietor. Yes, and even if the land lies waste, it reveals its nature. For if the wild stuff growing on the land is of fine quality, then by good farming the soil is capable of yielding cultivated crops of fine quality. So the nature of the soil can be ascertained even by the novice who has no experience of farming.’” (XVI.4-5)

**LS:** So even land that lays waste reveals its nature. Perhaps it reveals its nature to a higher degree than the cultivated land. Ischomachus disposes of the theoretician’s difficulty. There is no profound study necessary in order to know the nature of the soil. And Socrates remembers now something which confirms Ischomachus’s remark.

**Student:** . . . the nature of the soil to do with the gods, says there’s no use in fighting the gods.

**LS:** But the gods do not agree. He uses the expression, what the earth would enjoy bringing forth and nourishing. The earth is a goddess, isn’t she? So—and in addition, there would also come in the sun and rain also, so that has something to do with the gods. But the term used here, fighting against the gods, *theomachein*,<sup>8</sup> has this connotation, fighting against impossible odds.

**Student:** That means that the gods don’t change their minds.

**LS:** Pardon?

**Student:** That means that the gods never change their minds.

**LS:** That is a question which will be taken up later in today’s reading. It is not as simple as that. Yes.

**Student:** Perhaps I’m missing something, but it seems to me this argument of Ischomachus is simply very weak. The neighbors may be planting the wrong crops for that soil [and] getting a

crop that's true but not the best crop; the land that's not cultivated will tell you that it's good soil but not what it's good for. There may be all sorts of weeds growing on it, but those weeds are not going to tell me what crop I can plant which will grow best. It seems to me that the only way you can trust that the neighbors knew is that the neighbors knew the nature of the soil and hence planted what that soil can best produce.

**LS:** Ya, but if you had to trust the neighbors, you can be cheated, and human beings enter.

**Student:** Then you should in fact know what the nature of the soil is if you are going to be a farmer.

**LS:** Ya, sure, but the question is: Can you know it without profound study? And Ischomachus says yes.

**Student:** But can you?

**LS:** Well, let us hear what Socrates says now. This should settle it. Yes?

**Reader:**

“Well, I think I am now confident, Ischomachus, that I need not avoid farming from fear of not knowing the nature of the soil. The fact is, I am reminded that fishermen, though their business is in the sea, and they neither stop the boat to take a look nor slow down, nevertheless, when they see the crops as they scud past the farms, do not hesitate to express an opinion about the land, which is the good, and which is the bad sort, now condemning, now praising it. And, what is more, I notice that in their opinion about the good land they generally agree exactly with experienced farmers.” (XVI.6-7)

**LS:** So if even fisherman, who do their work on the sea and not on the land, and who pass by at great speed, do not stop, if they are competent judges of the goodness or badness of the land, well, then it must be very easy to judge of the nature of the land. And as Socrates says, he has seen that the judgment of these fisherman and the judgment of the most competent farmers agreed. What do you want more?

**Student:** They don't answer the first question of what the land is capable of growing.

**LS:** But—that's true, but the goodness, whether it is good land or bad land, this is at least already known.

**Student:** That's not the question they started with. They started with the question [of] what the land is capable of growing, and that question is supposed to be judged by looking to see what your neighbors grew.

**LS:** Ya, but does the question if it is good land, does this not determine what one can grow on it? And when it is bad land, what can you use bad land for? Some purposes you can use.

**Student:** I don't know about farming, but I assume the good land is good for some things and not for others depending on the nature of the crop.

**LS:** Ya, that is a question which you raised: this, what Socrates and Ischomachus say, is not a sufficient answer, but it satisfies both Socrates and Ischomachus. That this complicated, profound theoretical study of the nature of the soil which Socrates seemed to regard as indispensable is not necessary.

**Student:** He agrees to that, I am just perplexed as to why he agrees. What Ischomachus says is so unpersuasive to me that I don't understand why Socrates is persuaded by it.

**LS:** Well, perhaps Socrates does not know enough of farming to make a powerful objection [laughter]. Ya. Now, the next paragraph please.

**Reader:**

“Then, Socrates, let me refresh your memory on the subject of agriculture; but where do you wish me to begin? For I am aware that I shall tell you very much that you know already about the right method of farming.”

“First, Ischomachus, I think I should be glad to learn, for this is the philosopher's way, how I am to cultivate the land if I want to get the heaviest crops of wheat and barley out of it.” (XVI.9)

**LS:** Ya. This is the only place in this dialogue where the word “philosopher” occurs. In the parallel work of Xenophon, the dialogue *Hiero, On Tyranny*, philosophy is not mentioned at all. But there the man who talks is not Socrates but a poet. Here the speaker is Socrates, the philosopher. Therefore it is similar. Now the philosopher is here characterized, as a man, by a conditional or qualified love of gain. This love might induce him, under conditions not specified by Socrates, <sup>9</sup>to get the greatest possible harvest of crops—in other words, to become a farmer. Socrates might do that if he wished, but under no circumstances would Socrates wish to become a perfect gentleman. <sup>10</sup>I believe these two things must be brought together. Socrates is more concerned with lucre, with gain, than with perfect gentlemanship. There is a Platonic dialogue which is now generally regarded as spurious as far as I know, the *Hipparchus*, which contains a vindication of the love of gain. I think that is in perfect agreement with what Plato does in all his works, that he shows that all human desires, if they are understood deeply enough, all point to one and the same end: to philosophy. Whether it is *eros*, whether it is the longing for justice, or what we call political idealism, or whether it is *anything* else, even the love of gain, has this *inbred* destiny, as it were, to *transform* itself if properly cultivated into philosophy. This has here something to do with that. But I believe that the immediate importance is that while Socrates <sup>11</sup>does not consider becoming a perfect gentleman, he plays here with the thought of becoming a money-making farmer. Yes?

**Reader:**

“Well, you know, I take it, that fallow must be prepared for sowing?”

“Yes, I know.”

“Suppose, then, we start ploughing in winter?”

“Why, the land will be a bog!”

“‘How about starting—<sup>iii</sup>’” (XVI.10-11)

**LS:** . . . add a few things. [Laughter] Without having ever farmed, just using his common sense and having looked around when by passing by the farmers. Yes.

**Reader:**

“‘Yes, and the grass turned up is long enough at that season to serve as manure, but, not having shed seed, it will not grow. You know also, I presume, that fallow land can't be satisfactory unless it is clear of weeds and thoroughly baked in the sun?’

“‘Yes, certainly; that is essential, I think.’

“‘Do you think that there is any better way of securing that than by turning the land over as often as possible in summer?’

“‘Nay, I know for certain that if you want the weeds to lie on the surface and wither in the heat, and the land to be baked by the sun, the surest way is to plough it up at midday in midsummer.’

“‘And if men prepare the fallow by digging, is it not obvious that they too must separate the weeds from the soil?’

“‘Yes, and they must throw the weeds on the surface to wither, and turn up the ground so that the lower spit may be baked.’” (XVI.13-15)

**LS:** So you see Socrates knows quite a bit. He knows much more as we see in the sequel. And at the beginning of the next chapter, Socrates says—

**Reader:** “‘You see, then, Socrates, that we agree about the fallow.’”  
“‘It does—”(XVII.1)

**LS:** Yes, they agree, but the question is: Do they truly agree because they have equally knowledge, or what is it on Socrates part? That is perhaps not clear.

**Reader:** “‘It does seem so, to be sure.’

“‘And now as to the time for sowing, Socrates. Is it not your opinion that the time to sow is that which has been invariably found to be the best by past experience, and is universally approved by present practice?’” (XVII.1-2)

**LS:** And now he, Ischomachus, turns to the subject regarding which not only Socrates and he but all men agree. And therefore of course Socrates, confronted with this universal agreement, cannot but join in that agreement. Yes.

**Reader:** “‘For as soon as autumn ends, all men, I suppose, look anxiously to god, to see when he will send rain on the earth and make them free to sow.’

“‘Yes, Ischomachus, all men have made up their minds, of course, not to sow in dry ground if they can help it, those who sowed without waiting to be bidden by god having had to wrestle with many losses.’” (XVII.2)

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<sup>iii</sup> There is a break in the tape at this point.

**LS:** Yes, Socrates adds here the reflection which amounts to a reflection on divine punishment, but men, as he also says, men are sometimes *compelled* to sow at the wrong season, let's say to act against the advice of the god. This is a difficulty which is more fully developed in the sequel.

**Reader:**

“‘So far, then,’ said Ischomachus, ‘all the world is of one mind.’

“‘Yes,’ said I, ‘where god is our teacher we all come to think alike. For example, all agree that it is better to wear warm clothes in winter, if they can, and all agree on the desirability of having a fire, if they have wood.’” (XVII.3)

**LS:** Ya. In what the god teaches, all men agree. But while the god teaches about men, certain things good for them, he does not for this reason supply them with what they need in order to make that teaching useful. He may withhold from them these necessities. I believe you had something of this kind in mind, ya? So he teaches them that they should wear warm clothes in winter if they can. Yes.

**Student:** Mr. Strauss.

**LS:** Pardon?

**Student:** Mr. Strauss, it seems here that god teaches platitudes, whereas if we need to know when to sow, that we have to do it ourselves. Is my question clear?

**LS:** You mean no divine teaching is needed? No divine teaching is needed in order to inform men of that? But—

**Student:** Yeah, I mean he teaches, but . . .

**LS:** But Socrates—still one has to explain why all men agree in certain things, and Socrates' answer here is: the god teaches. What human beings teach, that differs from country to country, but what the god teaches is everywhere the same. And since everywhere men <sup>12</sup>follow these simple rules regarding sowing, this is not a human but a divine teaching. You expect too much theology from Xenophon [laughter].

**Student:** No, I . . . since when we need to know how to do, how to throw the seed, this is up to the cleverness of the questioner.

**LS:** Yes. Well, so man must make his own contribution to it, but what is separate is the framework within which all human knowledge is possible, [this] is not of human origin. Now, in paragraph four.

**Reader:**

“‘But,’ said Ischomachus, ‘when we come to the question whether sowing is best done early or very late or at the mid-season, we find much difference of opinion, Socrates.’ ‘And god,’ said I, ‘does not regulate the year by fixed laws; but in one year it may be advantageous to sow early, in another very late, in another at mid-season.’” (XVII.4)

**LS:** Socrates proves to be more of a theologian than Ischomachus [laughter], however insufficient he may be. Must not also the lack of universal agreement regarding the right time of sowing, this lack is again due to the god, yes? These paragraphs are the only ones occurring in the Ischomachus section that set forth Socrates' theology. The theme is developed in the *Memorabilia*, in two chapters of the *Memorabilia*, which if everything goes well we will read when we are through with our reading of the *Oeconomicus*. So the not-orderly manner in which god drives around the year is the reason why—this lack of order is the reason why there cannot be such a simple rule as to the time of the sowing as one would wish. Yes.

**Reader:**

“Then do you think, Socrates, that it is better to select one of these times for sowing, whether you sow much or little, or to begin at the earliest moment and continue sowing to the latest?”

“For my part, Ischomachus, I think it is best to sow for succession throughout the season. For in my opinion it is much better to get enough food at all times than too much at one time and not enough at another.”

“Here again, then, Socrates, pupil and teacher are of one opinion; and, moreover, you, the pupil, are first in stating this opinion.” (XVII.5-6)

**LS:** So here there is a spontaneous agreement of Socrates with Ischomachus, and the questions of Ischomachus are not altogether leading as they are in other cases. In paragraph five, Ischomachus does not tell Socrates how all men answer the question, as he did before; and by this he practically compelled Socrates to agree, because if all men say that, and Socrates is a man, Socrates also must say that. Here—yes, so at certain points, Socrates, the knowledge of some of these things becomes quite evident. Yes.

**Reader:**

“Well now, is casting the seed a complicated problem?” (XVII.7)

**LS:** Ya. Complicated, *technē*. Here is the first question raised by Socrates in the section on farming. That means a tacit confession of his ignorance. Socrates does not know anything about casting seeds. Of course this question, as all questions, presuppose some knowledge, and this question presupposes the knowledge that seeds are cast. We can imagine a state of ignorance in which a man would not even know that, as well as beyond that. Now.

**Reader:**

“Well now, is casting the seed a complicated art?”

“By all means let us take that also into consideration, Socrates. I presume that you know as well as I that the seed must be cast by the hand?”

“Yes, I have seen it.” (XVII.7)

**LS:** Yes, he has seen it, you see. It is thinkable that it is thrown somehow by the foot or by the mouth, I do not know [laughter], but it is thrown by the hand, and Socrates knows it because he has seen that people cast the seed by the hand. Yes.

**Reader:**



“‘Ah,’ he said, ‘but some men can cast evenly, and some cannot.’

“‘Then sowers no less than lyre-players need practice, that the hand may be the servant of the will.’” (XVII.7)

**LS:** Now it is not clear whether Socrates knew that some men can cast the seed evenly while others cannot. Socrates’ inference is [that] they need practice, just like lyre players. Is not sowing therefore also a complicated thing, if like lyre playing? And is therefore not the knowledge which Socrates is now acquiring, the knowledge of farming, is this not shot through with ignorance? Will Socrates be able to cast seed evenly after he has heard from Ischomachus that one should cast it evenly? Could he teach another man to cast it evenly? That would be the question. Yes.

**Reader:**

“‘Certainly. But suppose that some of the land is rather light and some rather heavy?’

“‘What do you mean by that?’ I interrupted. ‘By “light” do you mean “weak,” and by “heavy,” “strong”?’

“‘Yes, I do; and I ask you whether you would give the same quantity of seed to both kinds, or to which you would give more?’

“‘Well, my principle is this: the stronger the wine, the more water I add; the stronger the bearer, the heavier the burden I put on his back; and if it is necessary to feed others, I should require the richest men to feed the greatest number. But tell me whether weak land, like draught animals, becomes stronger when you put more corn into it.’

“‘Ah, you’re joking, Socrates,’ he said, laughing, ‘but allow me to tell you that, if after putting in the seed you plough it in again as soon as the blade appears when the land is obtaining plenty of nourishment from the sky, it makes food for the soil, and strengthens it like manure. If, on the other hand, you let the seed go on growing on the land until it is bolted, it’s hard for weak land to yield much grain in the end. It’s hard, you know, for a weak sow to rear a big litter of fine pigs.’

“‘Do you mean, Ischomachus, that the weaker the soil the less seed should be put into it?’

“‘Yes, of course, Socrates; and you agree when you say that your invariable custom is to make the burden light that is to be borne by the weak.’” (XVII.8-11)

**LS:** You see, so Socrates’ maxim was correct, as Ischomachus finds out, that we give more, we impose a heavier burden on the stronger and a lighter burden on the weaker, on the weaker, but Socrates, not knowing the case at hand, was unable to subsume it properly but he learned it very quickly from Ischomachus.

**Reader:**

“‘But the hoers, now, Ischomachus, why do you put them on the corn?’

“‘I presume you know that in winter there is a heavy rainfall?’

“‘Of course.’”

**LS:** But he knew “of course,” Socrates. Yes? That he did not learn from Ischomachus. Yes.

**Reader:**

“Let us assume, then, that part of the corn is waterlogged and covered with mud, and some of the roots are exposed by flooding. And it often happens, you know, that in consequence of rain weeds spring up among the corn and choke it.’

“All these things are likely to happen.’

“Then don't you think that in such circumstances the corn needs prompt succour?’

“Certainly.’

“What should be done, do you think, to succour the part that is under the mud?’

“The soil should be lifted.’

“And the part that has its roots exposed?’

“It should be earthed up.’

“What if weeds are springing up, choking the corn and robbing it of its food, much as useless drones rob bees of the food they have laid in store by their industry?’

“The weeds must be cut, of course, just as the drones must be removed from the hive.’

“Don't you think, then, that we have good reason for putting on men to hoe?’

“No doubt; but I am reflecting, Ischomachus, on the advantage of bringing in an apt simile. For you roused my wrath against the weeds by mentioning the drones, much more than when you spoke of mere weeds.’” (XVII.13-15)

**LS:** Yes. Now this observation is of course peculiar to Socrates and not to Ischomachus. Socrates has an interest in this kind of thing, and this kind of thing is called *rhetoric*. His teaching of the art of farming, his *exhorting* Critobulus to the art of farming, is an act of rhetoric. Socrates exercises the art of rhetoric both before and after this fateful day at which he met Ischomachus. But after that event, he used it <sup>13</sup>for a different purpose. For example, he used it now for the purpose of inducing the son of a gentleman farmer to take care of his estate, which he would not have done in the olden times. Now for this purpose of exhortation, and especially exhortation to the art of farming, one does not need solid knowledge. The knowledge which one acquires by passing by and by looking at farmhands at work, and having a single conversation with Ischomachus in a cloister in town is perfectly sufficient, provided one possesses, as Xenophon calls it, a good nature. Socrates has, of course, a good nature. Good nature corresponds roughly to what we would call today “gifted,” but it is only roughly, jocularly expressed, and a jocular expression, I believe, is in order, since in this dialogue there is a lot of laughing and joking, as you must have seen. Even Ischomachus becomes aware of how much Socrates jokes.

We may compare Socrates to an excellent advertiser of cars who does not know how to drive a car, let alone to manufacture one, yet is inspired to write an impressive and not always unsuccessful exhortation to buy cars by a single visit to a car factory, nay, even to a showroom. Or if this is improper and incompatible with the dignity of Socrates, let us at least confess that the people of Athens were not altogether inexcusable when they called a man who never ceased exhorting them to be good householders and to be good politicians without ever practicing what he preached an idle chatterer. This of course is not to deny that the art of farming in particular may well be used as a likeness of the rhetorical art. But this does not mean that the rhetorical art is altogether serious. To see this, one only has to compare rhetoric with the most serious of all sciences or arts, with theology. Now let us turn to the next chapter.

**Reader:**

“‘However,’ I continued, ‘after this comes reaping, I fancy. So give me any—’” (XVIII.1)

**LS:** So you see that he also knows that first you sow, and then you reap, and then later on you thresh, and you winnow and so on. Yes?

**Reader:**

“‘So give me any information you can with regard to that too.’

“‘Yes—unless I find that you know just what I do about that subject too. You know, then, that the corn must be cut.’

“‘I know that, naturally.’

“‘Are you for standing with your back to the wind when you cut corn, or facing it?’

“‘Not facing it, no! I think it is irritating both to the eyes and to the hands to reap with cornstalks and spikes blowing in your face.’

“‘And would you cut near the top or close to the ground?’

“‘If the stalk is short, I should cut low down, so that the straw may be more useful; but if it is long, I think it would be right to cut in the middle, in order that the threshers and winnowers may not spend needless trouble on what they don't want. I imagine that the stubble may be burnt with advantage to the land, or thrown on the manure heap to increase its bulk.’

“‘Do you notice, Socrates, that you stand convicted of knowing just what I know about reaping too?’

“‘Yes, it seems so; and I want to know besides whether I understand threshing as well.’

“‘Then you know this much, that draught animals are used in threshing?’

“‘Yes, of course I do; and that the term draught animals includes oxen, mules and horses.’

“‘Then do you not think that all the beasts know is how to trample on the corn as they are driven?’

“‘Why, what more should draught animals know?’ [Laughter]

“‘And who sees that they tread out the right corn, and that the threshing is level, Socrates?’

“‘The threshers, clearly. By continually turning the untrodden corn and throwing it under the animal's feet they will, of course, keep it level on the floor and take least time over the work.’

“‘So far, then, your knowledge is quite as good as mine.’

“‘Will not our next task be to clean the corn by winnowing, Ischomachus?’

“‘Yes, Socrates; and tell me, do you know that if you start on the windward side of the floor, you will find the husks carried right across the floor?’

“‘It must be so.’

“‘Is it not likely, then, that some will fall on the grain?’

“‘Yes, it is a long way for the husks to be blown, right over the grain to the empty part of the floor.’

“‘But what if you start winnowing against the wind?’

“‘Clearly the chaff will at once fall in the right place.’

“‘And as soon as you have cleaned the corn over one half of the floor, will you at once go on throwing up the rest of the chaff while the corn lies about just as it is, or will you first sweep the clean corn towards the edge, so as to occupy the smallest space?’

“Of course I shall first sweep the clean corn up, so that my chaff may be carried across into the empty space, and I may not have to throw up the same chaff twice.’

“Well, Socrates, it seems you are capable of teaching the quickest way of cleaning corn.’

“I really wasn’t aware that I understood those things [laughter]; and so I have been thinking for some time whether my knowledge extends to smelting gold, playing the flute, and painting pictures. For I have never been taught these things any more than I have been taught farming; but I have watched men working at these arts, just as I have watched them farming.’

“And didn’t I tell you just now that farming is the noblest art for this among other reasons, because it is the easiest to learn?’

“Enough, Ischomachus; I know. I understand about sowing, it seems, but I wasn’t aware that I understood.” (XVIII.1-10)

**LS:** Ya, so this lends a proof, this long argument, that farming is the easiest art, and <sup>14</sup>in the case of no other art could Socrates know without ever having learned it, possess the art. And that I believe <sup>15</sup>would be Xenophon’s answer to your question. Mathematics you have to learn; here there is a *techne* which you do not have to learn, only what you have seen passing by, occasionally observed, is perfectly sufficient for mastery of that art. Yes.

**Student:** Excuse me, Mr. Strauss. In other words, in the sense of society, to learn the farming in the sense of society plays a greater role than in learning, for instance, mathematics.

**LS:** To learn what is—?

**Student:** To learn farming in the sense of society is more important than to learn mathematics.

**LS:** From a certain point of view, yes. Men must have food under all circumstances that is supplied by the art of farming. But the key point here is that it is so easy to learn and, ya, in a way which no other art can be learned. Socrates gives here only these examples of these three arts, gold smelting, flute playing, and painting. I do not know what he would say about shoe-making. I suppose that shoe-making would still be more difficult than the art of farming because you have here to adapt each shoe to the individual whom they must fit. This individualization does not take place in the same degree in farming.

**Student:** In a sense, the shoe you have to make yourself, whereas here nature does the main part.

**LS:** Ya. Still, one could say that it is probably not a very difficult art, I mean as far as the theory goes, but the art of farming at any rate is here presented as the easiest of all. Now in all these chapters, 17 and 18, Socrates was the one that brought up this subject, which shows that he knows something of these matters. He will do so also in the last chapter which is the final chapter of the art of farming.

**Student:** We’re used to Socrates in the posture of saying that he knows that he doesn’t know. And here he seems to be saying quite the contrary, he doesn’t know, he didn’t know that he knew.

**LS:** He says he does not know, but then Ischomachus tells him you know.

**Student:** Ya, but he didn't know that he knew, where it's usually that he knows that he doesn't know.

**LS:** Yes, here, but that has to do with the easiness of that art. It has other implications I believe that will come out at the end of the next chapter. Yes.

**Reader:**

“‘However, is the planting of fruit trees another branch of agriculture?’ I continued.

“‘It is, indeed,’ answered Ischomachus.

“‘Then how can I understand all about sowing, and yet know nothing of planting?’

“‘What, don't you understand it?’

“‘How can I, when I don't know what kind of soil to plant in, nor how deep a hole to dig, nor how broad, nor how much of the plant should be buried, nor how it must be set in the ground to grow best?’” (XIX.1-2)

**LS:** You see Socrates—the very questions show that he is not *completely* ignorant of the art of planting, the specific questions which he raises here. Yes.

**Reader:**

“‘Come then, learn whatever you don't know. I am sure you have seen the sort of trenches they dig for plants.’

“‘Yes, often enough.’

“‘Did you ever see one more than three feet deep?’

“‘No, of course not—nor more than two and a half.’

“‘Well, did you ever see one more than three feet broad?’

“‘Of course not, nor more than two feet.’

“‘Come then, answer this question too. Did you ever see one less than a foot deep?’

“‘Never less than a foot and a half, of course. For the plants would come out of the ground when it is stirred about them if they were put in so much too shallow.’

“‘Then you know this well enough, Socrates, that the trenches are never more than two and a half feet deep, nor less than a foot and a half.’

“‘A thing so obvious as that can't escape one's eyes.’

“‘Again, can you distinguish between dry and wet ground by using your eyes?’

“‘Oh, I should think that the land round Lycabettus and any like it is an example of dry ground, and the low-lying land at Phalerum and any like it of wet.’

“‘In which then would you dig the hole deep for your plant, in the dry or the wet ground?’

“‘In the dry, of course; because if you dug deep in the wet, you would come on water, and water would stop your planting.’

“‘I think you are quite right. Now suppose the holes are dug; have you ever noticed how the plants for each kind of soil should be put in?’

“‘Oh, yes.’

“Then assuming that you want them to grow as quickly as possible, do you think that if you put some prepared soil under them the cuttings will strike sooner through the soft earth into the hard stuff, or through unbroken ground?”

“Clearly, they will form roots more quickly in prepared soil than in unbroken ground.”

“Then soil must be placed below the plant?”

“No doubt it must.”

“And if you set the whole cutting upright, pointing to the sky, do you think it would take root better, or would you lay part of it slanting under the soil that has been put below, so that it lies like a *gamma* upside down?”

“Of course I would; for then there would be more buds underground; and I notice that plants shoot from the buds above ground, so I suppose that the buds under the ground do just the same; and with many shoots forming underground, the plant will make strong and rapid growth, I suppose.”

“Then it turns out that on these points too your opinion agrees with mine. But would you merely heap up the earth, or make it firm round the plant?”

“I should make it firm, of course; for if it were not firm, I feel sure that the rain would make mud of the loose earth, and the sun would dry it up from top to bottom; so the plants would run the risk of damping off through too much water, or withering from too much heat at the roots.”

“About vine planting then, Socrates, your views are again exactly the same as mine.”  
(XIX.2-12)

**LS:** That’s a strange remark, isn’t it? They hadn’t talked about vine planting, but perhaps Ischomachus assumed that the same is true of vine planting as it is of tree planting. But Socrates does not reply at all to Ischomachus’ remark about vines. <sup>16</sup>Does he fear or suspect that Ischomachus is doing some too much bibbling and wishes to draw him away from it? I do not know. And paragraph twelve.

### Reader:

“Does this method of planting apply to the fig too?” I asked.

“Yes, and to all other fruit trees, I think; for in planting other trees why discard anything that gives good results with the vine?”

“But the olive—how shall we plant that, Ischomachus?”

“You know quite well, and are only testing me. For I am sure you see that a deeper hole is dug for the olive (it is commonly being done on the roadside). You must see also that every slip for planting is grafted to a stock, that clay is placed upon the head of every slip, and that the top of each plant is wrapped round.”

“Yes, I see all these points

“If you do, what is there in them that you don’t understand? Is it, Socrates, that you don’t know how to put the piece of earthenware on the top of the clay?”

“Of course, there is nothing in what you have said that I don’t know, Ischomachus. But I am again set thinking what can have made me answer ‘No’ to the question you put to me a while ago, when you asked me briefly, Did I understand planting? For I thought I should have nothing to say about the right method of planting. But now that you have undertaken to question me in particular, my answers, you tell me, agree exactly with the views of a farmer so famous for his skill as yourself! Can it be that questioning is a kind

of teaching, Ischomachus? The fact is, I have just discovered the plan of your series of questions! You lead me by paths of knowledge familiar to me—” (XIX.12-15)

**LS:** You lead me through what I know. Yes.

**Reader:**

““You lead me through what I know, point out things like what I know, and bring me to think that I really know things that I thought I had no knowledge of.”” (XIX.15)

**LS:** Ya, this reflection just as the previous reflection on image making, on simile making, is of course Socratic, not Ischomachean. But here this remark on whether teaching is not questioning, that Socrates seems to learn from Ischomachus’s teaching practice. And we have seen other occasions where Socrates learned from Ischomachus things other than farming. What Xenophon says elsewhere on Socratic dialectics, Socrates’ art of conversation, leading people through what they know or believe to know, this could be understood as something that Socrates developed out of what he had learned from Ischomachus. Yes.

**Reader:**

““Now suppose I questioned you about money,’ said Ischomachus, ‘whether it is good or bad, could I persuade you that you know how to distinguish good from false by test? And by putting questions about flute-players could I convince you that you understand flute-playing; and by means of questions about painters and other artists—’

““You might, since you have convinced me that I understand agriculture, though I know that I have never been taught this art.’

““No, it isn’t so, Socrates. I told you a while ago that agriculture is such a humane, gentle art that you have but to see her and listen to her, and she at once makes you understand her. She herself gives you many lessons in the best way of treating her. For instance, the vine climbs the nearest tree, and so teaches you—”” (XIX.16-18)

**LS:** You see, he comes back to the vine.

**Reader:**

““that she wants support. And when her clusters are yet tender, she spreads her leaves about them, and teaches you to shade the exposed parts from the sun’s rays during that period. But when it is now time for her grapes to be sweetened by the sun, she sheds her leaves, teaching you to strip her and ripen her fruit. And thanks to her teeming fertility, she shows some mellow clusters while she carries others yet sour, so saying to you: Pluck my grapes as men pluck figs,—choose the luscious ones as they come.”” (XIX.18-19)

**LS:** Ya, this chapter on tree planting contains more Socratic oaths than any other chapter, and not a single oath by Ischomachus. The chapter containing the largest number of oaths, both Socratic and Ischomachean, is chapter twelve, the chapter opening the section on stewards. Could chapter twelve be the beginning and chapter nineteen the end of one and the same section, the section on stewards? After all, the stewards are supposed to know these things and to teach the field hands. Ischomachus will not go around and show the field hands how to cast seed evenly. So then the whole section on stewards would consist of two parts: the virtues of the

stewards, chapters twelve to <sup>17</sup>fourteen; and then the art of farming. There is a passage when the art of farming is introduced in chapter fifteen at the beginning. It is introduced in connection with the qualities that the stewards or bailiffs must have. Socrates became interested in the art of farming only after he had become interested in perfect gentlemanship, farming being the art nearest and dearest to the perfect gentleman. One could raise this question at this point, this is all the *Oeconomicus* says about the art of farming. If you compare it with any other ancient book on farming, especially Virgil's *Bucolics*, you see that there is nothing otherwise said here about cattle raising. Cattle raising. Although, for example, bee keeping surely played a role in Attica. I suggest this explanation: the word for plants, the word for plants: *phyta*, is derivative from the same root from which *physis*, nature, comes. By being concerned with *farming*, Socrates continues in a properly subdued and qualified way, his earlier interest in *phusiologia*.

This interest shows also, if in a very different way, in the theo-teleology developed by Socrates in the *Memorabilia*. But the *Memorabilia* are a different work and they have a different purpose.

So I do not know whether we shall meet next Wednesday. I had . . . [hoped] we could finish our reading of the *Oeconomicus* before Christmas, otherwise we will have to do it after the New Year. Then we will perhaps have a coherent discussion of the *Oeconomicus* with a question in mind: the *Oeconomicus* is the Socratic *logos*, the Socratic discourse of Xenophon. Why is the Socratic *logos* of Xenophon devoted to the economic art, and with special regard to the art of farming? That we will take up when we are through. Is there any point you would like to raise now? Yes.

**Student:** You said that this may be Xenophon's reply to Aristophanes. Is it in a suggestion that to our eyes, that these things we've been reading are also rather funny?

**LS:** I cannot understand you. Can you translate?

**Student:** He asked if it's only to our eyes that these things are funny.

**LS:** Well, that is a perfectly legitimate question which you raise. But there are some points which are funny not only for us, but in themselves. May I remind you of the somewhat ponderous lectures Ischomachus gives to his young wife? [Laughter] It's just one example. But the more superficial thing, that very frequently—I don't have the figures here now—laughing and joking, the words laughing and joking occur in this work. So it has a playful character, there is no doubt. How far this extends, that is another matter. I have never read . . . I mean, it was used, it was highly respected in antiquity; if I remember well, Cicero translated <sup>18</sup>a part of it, among other things. But I have never read that it was regarded as something comical. That I have never read.

**Student:** I only ask that because this last dialogue reminds me of something of the value or importance, where Ischomachus would be the straight man and Socrates is having a great deal of fun. It reminded me of what a comedy does more than anything else, something like a Moliere comedy, where they have somebody just saying something very funny . . .



**LS:** Yes, but I think that Socrates always had a poker face. You know he never—<sup>19</sup>only once is he said to have laughed or smiled in both Plato and Xenophon, only a single time. And that was either on the day of his death in Plato, or after his condemnation in Xenophon. But otherwise, whenever he says very funny things where people can't help laughing, <sup>20</sup>he doesn't laugh. He does not. So one must form one's own judgment there. It is—on the other extreme, for example, there is a Platonic dialogue called the *Euthydemus*, which is universally regarded as a farce, just very comical. And here the danger is that one does not take it seriously because it is so farcical, you know? And on the other hand, the very serious utterances also have their comical implications, and here I think they are rather obvious, especially if one keeps in mind the mere fact that <sup>21</sup>on one occasion when Ischomachus speaks of himself, what he's doing, he uses—without quoting but in fact quoting—he uses a verse from Aristophanes' *Clouds*. Why should he do it? Could Xenophon have been able to express that simple thought without borrowing a verse from the *Clouds*? So then he must have had something in mind in doing that, pointing to the *Clouds*, and there are more pointers to the *Clouds* in the *Oeconomicus* as I have mentioned. For example, the enumeration of topics in chapter three, which is very disorderly—what was the order?—farming, horsemanship, and wife, but which becomes meaningful at once if you think of the *Clouds*, where farming, horsemanship, and the wife are the data from which the action emerges. So then, begin—

[end of tape]

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<sup>1</sup> Deleted “so we, let us”

<sup>2</sup> Deleted “You”

<sup>3</sup> Deleted “by”

<sup>4</sup> Deleted “which have given”

<sup>5</sup> Deleted “draw out more”

<sup>6</sup> Deleted “and”

<sup>7</sup> Deleted “that it is not a very”

<sup>8</sup> Deleted “is of course”

<sup>9</sup> Deleted “to strive for the”

<sup>10</sup> Deleted “that”

<sup>11</sup> Deleted “does not seriously”

<sup>12</sup> Deleted “have”

<sup>13</sup> Deleted “in a different”

<sup>14</sup> Deleted “in no other”

<sup>15</sup> Deleted “is”

<sup>16</sup> Deleted “is”

<sup>17</sup> Deleted “fifteen”

<sup>18</sup> Deleted “it”

<sup>19</sup> Deleted “he is”

<sup>20</sup> Deleted “but”

<sup>21</sup> Deleted “he”

## Session 7: no date

**Leo Strauss:** [in progress] —for that purpose, who are supervised by bailiffs. Now, we had first an account of the treatment or management of the wife, and then of how the man, the husband, the master lives, then the bailiffs or overseers, and finally, the *techne*, the art or *episteme*, the science of farming. Farming is the only subject here discussed not categorized. Now I think we should now begin to read chapter 20.

### Reader:

“And now I asked, ‘How is it then, Ischomachus, if the operations of husbandry are so easy to learn and all alike know what must needs be done, that all have not the same fortune? How is it that some farmers live in abundance and have more than they want, while others cannot get the bare necessities of life, and even run into debt?’

“‘Oh, I will tell you, Socrates. It is not knowledge nor want of knowledge on the part of farmers that causes one to thrive while another is needy. You won’t hear a story like this running about: The estate has gone to ruin because the sower sowed unevenly, or because he didn’t plant the rows straight, or because someone, not knowing the right soil for vines, planted them in barren ground, or because someone didn’t know that it is well to prepare the fallow for sowing, or because someone didn’t know that it is well to manure the land. No, you are much more likely to hear it said: The man gets no corn from his field because he takes no trouble to see that it is sown or manured. Or, the man has got no wine, for he takes no trouble to plant vines or to make his old stock bear. Or, the man has neither olives nor figs, because he doesn’t take the trouble; he does nothing to get them.’” (XX.1-5)

**LS:** Ya. So Ischomachus has proved before to Socrates’ satisfaction that the art of farming is very easy to learn, so everyone knows it or can know it if only slightly reminded by a man like Ischomachus. What then accounts for the fact that there are so many bad farmers and so few good farmers? And <sup>1</sup>to explain that, Ischomachus makes here a distinction of importance between the art or science and the taking trouble, the diligence, the assiduity, the *active* concern. The latter is of crucial importance. You have to know something about what every child knows, but taking trouble, assiduity, that is another matter.

Now this distinction here made between the art and the care or concern or taking trouble, you will find also in Plato’s *Republic* in the Second Book, 374d to e, and even more tellingly at a later passage in 412, in Book 3, 412 c to d. Now I will read this to you. I will read the translation.

“That the rulers must be the elder and the ruled the younger, is obvious.” “It is.” “And the rulers must be their best?” “This too.” “And do not the best of the farmers prove to be the best farmers?” “Yes.” “And in this case, since we want them to be the best of the guardians, must they not be the best guardians, the most regardful of the city?” “Yes.” “They must then to begin with be intelligent in such matters and capable, and furthermore careful of the interests of the city?” “That is so.” “But one would be most likely to be careful of that which he loved.” “Necessarily.” “And again, one would be most likely to

love that whose interests he supposed to coincide with his own, and thought that when it prospered, he too would prosper and if not, the contrary.”<sup>i</sup>

So the caring is here traced first to love in general, and then to self-love in particular. Something of this kind is happening here too as you will see. Now the difficulty of the passage which we are reading here is that Socrates frequently suggests both in Plato and Xenophon that virtue *is* knowledge, that knowledge is sufficient for acting here. For instance, in the *Memorabilia*, Book 3, chapter one, there is a young man who has taken lessons with a teacher of strategy and has learned strategy, and Socrates says: Well now, he is a general because he has the *knowledge* required for that, and practice, or being elected or appointed a general, that is absolutely trivial and unnecessary. <sup>2</sup>The only important point is knowledge. But of course that is not so simple. And for example, in the *Laws*, to take a very clear case, in the First Book of the *Laws*, we find this observation: if you have a pilot of a boat, he must know the art of the pilot. But this does not yet guarantee against seasickness. This is another proposition. There must be something else in him which keeps down the seasickness. So knowledge is not enough.

Now the crucial importance of this point for Socrates as a whole: virtue is wisdom, he says. But does not virtue have another ingredient than knowledge? One could say virtue is—try to solve this thing, you could say [that] virtue is not wisdom or knowledge in general but *phronesis*, which is ordinarily translated by practical wisdom or being sensible, for in that case, there is no separation possible between the intellectual ingredient and the other one. If you <sup>3</sup>see a man who knows what is to be done in each case but never does it, you would not call him a man of practical wisdom or a sensible man, although he has . . . the judgment alone would not suffice. Here in this particular case, knowledge and action, knowledge and virtue, seem to be inseparable. There is only one difficulty: that the distinction between knowledge—or science, as we might translate the word—and practical wisdom, *phronesis*, is Aristotelian rather than Platonic, to say nothing of Xenophon. And therefore we cannot make use of it without <sup>4</sup>having laid a proper foundation. But even in Aristotle the difficulty reappears, because he makes clear that for good action, two ingredients are necessary: practical wisdom *and* moral virtue. And this distinction is ultimately based on the difference between perceiving or knowing and willing or desiring, a distinction which cannot be gainsaid. Now to return to Xenophon, here he must somehow explain this care, this assiduity, this concern. He must make clear what its root is, and that he will do in the sequel. Now let us read the sequel.

### Reader:

““It is not the farmers reputed to have made some clever discovery in agriculture who differ in fortune from others: it is things of this sort that make all the difference, Socrates. This is true of generals also: there are some branches of strategy in which one is better or worse than another, not because he differs in intelligence, but in point of carefulness, undoubtedly. For the things that all generals know, and most privates, are done by some commanders and left undone by others. For example, they all know that when marching through an enemy's country, the right way is to march in the formation in which they will fight best, if need be. Well, knowing this, some observe the rule, others break it. All know that it is right to post sentries by day and night before the camp; but this too is a duty that some attend to, while others neglect it. Again, where will you

<sup>i</sup> Strauss reads from *The Republic*, trans. Paul Shorey (Loeb Classical Library)(Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937).

find the man who does not know that, in marching through a defile, it is better to occupy the points of vantage first? Yet this measure of precaution too is duly taken by some and neglected by others.” (XX.5-10)

**LS:** So Ischomachus now illustrates the same thing, what is true of farming—namely, the crucial importance of *care*, of concern—by the example of an art which seems to require much, much more intellectual effort, much more *inventiveness* than farming. And this is—in strategy, the examples speak for themselves. There are some rules, as we say, which should be observed, for example, in marching through enemy country, and people simply neglect to do these things; and <sup>5</sup>they know it, but they neglect it. Yes?

**Reader:**

“So, too, everyone will say that in agriculture there is nothing so good as manure, and their eyes tell them that nature produces it. All know exactly how it is produced, and it is easy to get any amount of it; and yet, while some take care to have it collected, others care nothing about it. Yet the rain is sent from heaven, and all the hollows—” (XX.10-11)

**LS:** From the god above.

**Reader:**

“and all the hollows become pools of water, and the earth yields herbage of every kind which must be cleared off the ground by the sower before sowing; and the rubbish he removes has but to be thrown into water, and time of itself will make what the soil likes. For every kind of vegetation, every kind of soil in stagnant water turns into manure.” (XX.11)

**LS:** We still stop here. Now it is not only easy to know, but also easy to do these things, and nevertheless they are neglected. These things are easy to do (some of these things, at any rate, are easy to do) since a large part of it is done by itself—in this case of farming, by time. You have only to wait, then it will be done, and yet it is neglected. Yes.

**Reader:**

“And again, all the ways of treating the soil when it is too wet for sowing or too salt for planting are familiar to all men—how the land is drained by ditches, how the salt is corrected by being mixed with saltless substances, liquid or dry. Yet these matters, again, do not always receive attention. Suppose a man to be wholly ignorant as to what the land can produce, and to be unable to see crop or tree on it, or to hear from anyone the truth about it, yet is it not far easier for any man to prove a parcel of land than to test a horse or to test a human being? For the land never plays tricks, but reveals frankly and truthfully what she can and what she cannot do.” (XX.12-14)

**LS:** You remember the earlier discussion where Ischomachus took issue with what we may call the theoreticians who say that one must first know the nature of the land, the nature of the soil, and they imply that this is not an easy thing. And Ischomachus rejected it. Now he admits that it is not quite as easy to know as he said before, but nevertheless, it is easy enough. It is much easier to know the soil, the nature of the soil, than a horse. The soil doesn’t play tricks, to say nothing of human beings who can deceive very well about themselves. Yes.

**Reader:**

“‘I think that just because she conceals nothing from our knowledge and understanding, the land is the surest tester of good and bad men. For the slothful cannot plead ignorance, as in other arts: land, as all men know, responds to good treatment. Husbandry is the clear accuser of the recreant soul. For no one persuades himself that man could live without bread; therefore if a man will not dig and knows no other profit-earning trade, he is clearly minded to live by stealing or robbery or begging—or he is an utter fool.’” (XX.14-15)

**LS:** Yes. Now this—of course we must not forget to whom Ischomachus says that: Socrates, who obviously is not a farmer, obviously he is not an artisan, who has no money-making art altogether. Then he must live from theft or robbery or begging, or he is altogether irrational. This throws an important light on the difference between Socrates and Ischomachus, and on the posture of Ischomachus to Socrates. Now farming makes the lowest demands on men’s knowledge because the land, the earth, is the most honest, the most just of all beings. The knowledge required for farming is easily available to everyone. The difference between successful farmers and bunglers is due to diligence or the lack of it. Farming, or rather the earth, is a reliable accuser not only of the bad farmer but of the bad soul. While farming makes the lowest demands on intelligence, it makes the most unmistakable demands on character. And that is the gist of the recommendation of farming by Ischomachus, and it throws an interesting light on Socrates, who is not a farmer. Now let us read the sequel.

**Reader:**

“‘Farming,’ he added, ‘may result in profit or in loss; it makes a great difference to the result, even when many laborers are employed, whether the farmer takes care that the men are working during the working hours or is careless about it. For one man in ten by working all the time may easily make a difference, and another by knocking off before the time; and, of course, if the men are allowed to be slack all the day long, the decrease in the work done may easily amount to one half of the whole. Just as two travelers on the road, both young and in good health, will differ so much in pace that one will cover two hundred furlongs to the other’s hundred, because the one does what he set out to do, by going ahead, while the other is all for ease, now resting by a fountain or in the shade, now gazing at the view, now wooing the soft breeze; so in farm work there is a vast difference in effectiveness between the men who do the job they are put on to do and those who, instead of doing it, invent excuses for not working and are allowed to be slack. In fact, between good work and dishonest slothfulness there is as wide a difference as between actual work and actual idleness. Suppose the vines are being hoed to clear the ground of weeds: if the hoeing is so badly done that the weeds grow ranker and more abundant, how can you call that anything but idleness?’” (XX.16-20)

**LS:** Ya, but here it is spoken now chiefly of the workers, of the farmhands, but we have spoken first of the general as an example. And he speaks again of wine, and he had already done this in an earlier passage. And we have noted this before. Socrates never brings up the subject of wine, and whether he thinks that Ischomachus has a propensity to wine, the fruit of the vine, a propensity which should not be encouraged, that I do not know, but it is possible to guess that. Yes?

**Reader:**

“These, then, are the evils that crush estates far more than sheer lack of knowledge. For the outgoing expenses of the estate are not a penny less; but the work done is insufficient to show a profit on the expenditure; after that there's no need to wonder if the expected surplus is converted into a loss. On the other hand, to a careful man, who works strenuously at agriculture, no business gives quicker returns than farming. My father taught me that and proved it by his own practice. For he never allowed me to buy a piece of land that was well farmed; but pressed me to buy any that was uncultivated and unplanted owing to the owner's neglect or incapacity. “Well farmed land,” he would say, “costs a large sum and can't be improved—” (XX.21-23)

**LS:** Yes, has—no, the Greek word *epidosis* is also the Greek word for “progress.” There cannot be any progress, any addition.

**Reader:**

“and he held that where there is no room for progress, addition, there is not much pleasure to be got from the land: landed estate and livestock must be continually coming on to give the fullest measure of satisfaction. Now nothing improves more than a farm that is being transformed from a wilderness into fruitful fields. I assure—”

**LS:** Now one second. Ischomachus gives now the example of his father, and this shows what an entirely different man the Xenophontic Socrates is from the Aristophanean Socrates. In the Aristophanean Socrates, the young man Pheidippides is very far from admiring his father Strepsiades. But here we have a good man, Ischomachus, who admires his father and takes his example. Now what did Ischomachus' father, whose name is not mentioned, do? That is, overstated, to make it quite clear: he bought run-down farms, improved them—and let us anticipate what will become clear in this immediately: then he sold them again, of course not at a loss. And then he bought again another run-down farm, and the same thing again *ad infinitum*. And therefore farming can be *very* lucrative. The greatest pleasure is that deriving from progress, to use a comprehensive term, whether that is true of farming or cattle raising or even regarding one's self. Socrates says this in the last chapter of the *Memorabilia*, that he is very satisfied with his life. He thinks he has lived as well as possible and as pleasantly as possible, and he lives so pleasantly because he was aware of his becoming better, and in this case that means of making progress toward wisdom. That is the highest form of pleasure. Now let us read the sequel.

**Reader:**

“I assure you, Socrates, that we have often added a hundredfold to the value of a farm. There is so much money in this idea, Socrates, and it is so easy to learn, that no sooner have you heard of it from me than you know as much as I do, and can go home and teach it to someone else, if you like.” (XX.24-25)

**LS:** Now Ischomachus does not for one moment think that Socrates will imitate Ischomachus' father, becoming an improver of run-down farms. He is not even sure that Socrates will *teach* that conceit to others. He says “if you wish.” You may also have noticed that he says here twice, “Socrates.” That is an appeal, an appeal that Socrates should consider that, and if possible that within his limits should act upon it. Yes.

**Reader:**

“Moreover, my father did not get his knowledge of it at secondhand, nor did he discover it by much thought; but he would say that, thanks to his love of husbandry and hard work, he had coveted a farm of this sort in order that he might have something to do, and combine profit with pleasure. For I assure you, Socrates, no Athenian, I believe, had such a strong natural love of agriculture as my father.” (XX.25-26)

**LS:** Ya. So now Ischomachus’ father—Ischomachus traces his father’s care, caring, to his love of farming. That is something behind which or beyond which Ischomachus doesn’t go. And now Socrates will question that in the sequel. Let us see.

**Reader:**

“Now on hearing this I asked, ‘Did your father keep all the farms that he cultivated, Ischomachus, or did he sell when he could get a good price?’”

“‘He sold, of course,’ answered Ischomachus,—” (XX.26)

**LS:** Yes, of course is in the original: “by Zeus.” Ya.

**Reader:**

“‘He sold, by Zeus,’<sup>ii</sup> answered Ischomachus, ‘but, you see, owing to his industrious habits, he would promptly buy another that was out of cultivation.’”

“‘You mean, Ischomachus, that your father really loved agriculture as intensely as merchants love corn. So deep is their love of corn that on receiving reports that it is abundant anywhere, merchants will voyage in quest of it: they will cross the Aegean, the Euxine, the Sicilian sea; and when they have got as much as possible, they carry it over the sea, and they actually stow it in the very ship in which they sail themselves. And when they want money, they don’t throw the corn away anywhere at haphazard, but they carry it to the place where they hear that corn is most valued and the people prize it most highly, and deliver it to them there. Yes, your father’s love of agriculture seems to be something like that.’” (XX.26-28)

**LS:** So that is the root of the love of agriculture, and Socrates makes it still clearer in the last part of this chapter.

**Reader:** “‘You’re joking, Socrates,’ rejoined Ischomachus; ‘but I hold that a man has a no less genuine love of building who sells his houses as soon as they are finished and proceeds to build others.’”

“‘Of course, by Zeus, and I declare, Ischomachus, on my oath that I believe you, that all men naturally love whatever they think will bring them profit.’” (XX.29)

**LS:** Ya, all men love naturally what they—no, I am sorry, it was not right, correct—all men by nature *believe* to love that by which they *believe* to be benefited. This is double, and therefore that was a bit hard for some people’s understanding, even if they are classical scholars, and therefore they emended the text and they got rid of one of these two “believes.” But it makes perfect sense, I think, what he says. This is a *delusion* which man has, and a natural delusion as

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<sup>ii</sup> In translation: “of course”

we learn here, that we, at least most of us, identify what we believe to be benefited by with what we love. You all must have your experiences [of this]: that if someone is very nice to you, you may change your mind about his character, his intelligence and what not. And that is only a simple form of this general phenomenon. *Nomizein* is the word which is used twice here in Greek which is here translated “we believe,” which one can do, but which is also the root of this word is *nomos*, law, convention, meaning men put an arbitrary end to reflection and they do not question that they are in love or they are in apparent love; and they can’t help thinking that, and they give in to that, to that result of a certain movement of the soul. The truth about Ischomachus’ father’s care, his love of farming. What impels men to act is not knowledge, but the desire to be benefited. What they understand by being benefited depends indeed on knowledge or opinion. And we can believe to be benefited, for example, by a large inheritance or whatever else it may be, and it may be our ruin.

Now Socrates had turned to Ischomachus in order to find out what perfect gentlemanship is, what the actions of the perfect gentleman are. Those actions include economic actions. The perfect gentleman is a *farmer*. His motive is not so much gain as the noble, the common good. He does all these things for the sake of the city so that he can contribute to what we would call taxes. (The ancients had different institutions.) Ischomachus admires his father, yet Ischomachus’ father is not simply a farmer. He is a super-farmer. He uses farms as merchandise. Ischomachus thus come close to transforming *oeconomia*, management of the house, into “*chrematistics*,” money-making. He comes close to *abandoning* perfect gentlemanship. And we must link this up with Socrates’ economic teaching, which is presented in the very first chapter of the *Oeconomicus*, long after the conversation with Ischomachus where the art of managing the household is defined as *increasing* wealth, and Socrates observes complete silence on any limits to that increase of wealth, and in particular on any limitation by right or justice. That is the last consequence of the great step which Ischomachus has taken here. Xenophon discusses this question, this transformation of the gentleman into something other, in his *Education of Cyrus*, Book 1, chapter five, when Cyrus, the future empire builder, persuades the Persian nobility that it is not enough to be gentlemen but that you must get something out of it, and especially of course also so-called material benefits. And he succeeds in that. They are very easily corrupted. And that is the beginning of the empire and the beginning of the ruin of the empire at the same time. You will find there is a close kinship between this discussion and the *Education of Cyrus*, and the end of Aristotle’s *Eudemian Ethics*, where he speaks of the perfect gentleman, the noble and good man in contradistinction to the good man. The good man is the man who does the right things but without any regard to nobility, and it might be good to read that.

Now with a view to a certain passage, another passage, in the *Education of Cyrus*, Karl Marx speaks in the *Capital* of Xenophon’s “quote characteristic bourgeois instinct.” You can see how one can get this impression. Marx thinks of a certain passage in the [*Education of Cyrus*]<sup>6</sup> where Xenophon comes close to suggesting division of labor within the workshop. But as for Xenophon’s instincts, were they not controlled by his admiration for Socrates, or must we understand Socrates also in Marxist terms as some people in our century have tried to do? I think it is a better explanation to consider the *Oeconomicus* together with the other Xenophonic dialogue, the *Hiero*. In both dialogues, Xenophon experiments with extreme or marginal possibilities, possibilities which<sup>7</sup> can barely be thought of. In the *Hiero*, it is a question of beneficent tyranny: tyranny originally acquired by force or fraud; but later, after the tyrant has



acquired this power, he uses [it] for the benefit of his subjects, and perhaps he can do many things which a limited government cannot do. But this is an extreme, a thought which Xenophon puts into the mouth of a poet somewhere in Sicily, not Socrates. Here we have this similar example, the transformation of management of the household into “chrematistics.” Now what Xenophon did in the *Hiero* has very much to do with what Machiavelli did many centuries later. Machiavelli knew Xenophon and refers to him; and what he did here, in the *Oeconomicus*, regarding the management of the household has very much to do with what some post-Machiavellian thinkers did—for instance, Locke—and I think one must keep this in mind for a better understanding.

Now let us come back and try to read the last chapter—only this general remark, [so] that we know where we stand. Ischomachus had shown that in farming, knowledge fulfills a very minor function. Of course, you have to know these things—that you have to cast the seed evenly and not unevenly, but that everyone can know this and learn it within a very short time. But the art of farming seems to be the most important ingredient of the gentleman’s life. Does knowledge then fulfill a rather minor function in gentlemanship, in virtue? This would be terrible, and therefore it will be corrected in the coming, following chapter.

**Reader:**

“‘But I am pondering over the skill with which you have presented the whole argument in support of your proposition, Ischomachus. For you stated that husbandry is the easiest of all arts to learn, and after hearing all that you have said, I am quite convinced that this is so.’”

“‘By Zeus it is,’ cried Ischomachus; ‘but I grant you, Socrates, that in respect of aptitude for command, which is common to all forms of business alike—agriculture, politics, estate-management, warfare—in that respect the intelligence shown by different classes of men varies greatly.’” (XXI.1-3)

**LS:** Yes, now let us stop there. Now the high intellectual rank of gentlemanship is restored by consideration of the fact that farming requires necessarily *rulership*, the ability or knowledge of ruling. And regarding this rulership, men differ very much in judgment, and not only in care. Socrates had spoken very highly of rulership earlier when discussing the stewards. Yet he had not spoken there of its intellectual ingredient. That is a subject which comes out here.

**Reader:**

“‘For example, on a man-of-war, when the ship is on the high seas and the rowers must toil all day to reach port, some boatswains can say and do the right thing to sharpen the men’s spirits and make them work with a will, while others are so unintelligent that it takes them more than twice the time to finish the same voyage. Here they land bathed in sweat, with mutual congratulations, boatswain and seamen. There they arrive with a dry skin; they hate their master and he hates them.’” (XXI.3-4)

**LS:** So this is a first illustration of rulership, the boatswain, and on a man-of-war. Now we come to the second highest judgment.

**Reader:**

“Generals, too, differ from one another in this respect. For some make their men unwilling to work and to take risks, disinclined and unwilling to obey, except under compulsion, and actually proud of defying their commander: aye, and they cause them to have no sense of dishonour when something disgraceful occurs. Contrast the genius, the brave and scientific leader: let him take over the command of these same troops, or of others if you like. What effect has he on them? They are ashamed to do a disgraceful act, think it better to obey, and take a pride in obedience, working cheerfully, every man and all together, when it is necessary to work. Just as a love of work may spring up in the mind of a private soldier here and there, so a whole army under the influence of a good leader is inspired with love of work and ambition to distinguish itself under the commander's eye. Let this be the feeling of the rank and file for their commander; and I tell you, he is the strong leader, he, and not the sturdiest soldier, not the best with bow and javelin, not the man who rides the best horse and is foremost in facing danger, not the ideal of knight or targeteer, but he who can make his soldiers feel that they are bound to follow him through fire and in any adventure. Him you may justly call high-minded who has many followers of like mind; and with reason may he be said to march “with a strong arm” whose will many an arm is ready to serve; and truly—” (XXI.4-8)

**LS:** You see, <sup>8</sup>he doesn't have a strong arm, yet nevertheless he may be said to rule with a strong arm because <sup>9</sup>he's able to innervate many arms to obey him.

**Reader:** “and truly great is he who can do great deeds by his will rather than his strength.” (XX.8)

**LS:** Ya, by his judgment rather than by his strength.<sup>10</sup> Now this example is much more extensively discussed than that of the boatswain, the example of the general. He is a knower. He is not the best soldier in the army or the best—say, the best marksmen or the best horseman, but he is supreme in judgment, in knowledge. Ya?

**Reader:**

“So too in private industries, the man in authority—bailiff or manager—who can make the workers keen, industrious<sup>iii</sup> and persevering—he is the man who gives a lift to the business and swells the surplus.” (XXI.9-10)

**LS:** —spoken of the general, here [he] comes back to the bailiff. Here too, rulership is required and hence knowledge or intelligence. Yes.

**Reader:**

“But Socrates, if the appearance of the master in the field, of the man who has the fullest power to punish the bad and reward the strenuous workman, makes no striking impression on the men at work, I for one cannot envy him. But if at sight of him they bestir themselves, and a spirit of determination and rivalry and eagerness to excel falls on every workman, then I should say this man has a touch of the kingly nature in him.” (XXI.10-11)

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<sup>iii</sup> There is a break in the tape here, and the remainder of the passage is supplied from the translation.

**LS:** Of the kingly character, yes. Now Ischomachus now finally rises to the highest, to the master of the farmhands in the first place. And they must have something of the kingly character, let me [call it], the king's power to harm and to help. He speaks of the power to harm first, not without reason. Ischomachus tacitly corrects Socrates' view according to which there is no essential difference between the master of slaves and the king. There is one, according to Ischomachus. Yes.

**Reader:**

“And this, in my judgment, is the greatest thing in every operation that makes any demand on the labour of men, and therefore in agriculture. Mind you, I do not go so far as to say that this can be learnt at sight or at a single hearing. On the contrary, to acquire these powers a man needs education; he must be possessed of great natural gifts; above all, he must be a genius.” (XXI.11)

**LS:** Here the word which he translates as genius already, before, is in Greek simply divine, and of course we must see what this means. The rule, rulership, in contradistinction to farming, cannot be learned by passing by and looking at what farm workers do or by hearing of it occasionally, as Socrates hears it from Ischomachus, for in order to become a ruler, one needs three things: education or breeding; a good nature, which is not the same as good-natured; and above all, having become divine. When speaking of the desirable stewards, Ischomachus had spoken of ambitious natures. Now he speaks of good natures, which is a higher thing. And what does he mean by having become divine? Let us read the next paragraph.

**Reader:**

“For I reckon this gift is not altogether human, but divine—this power to win willing obedience: it is manifestly a gift of the gods to the true votaries of prudence. Despotic rule over unwilling subjects they give, I fancy, to those whom they judge worthy to live the life of Tantalus, of whom it is said that in hell he spends eternity, dreading a second death.” (XXI.12)

**LS:** Here <sup>11</sup>regarding the translation: what he translates by prudence is in the original *sōphrosynē*, which I would translate by moderation, not only prudence. And then, a despot, we frequently translate the Greek word *tyrannikon* by despotic, but this is misleading because a despot is a ruler of the household, a ruler of slaves, and which according to the classics was in itself legitimate. But a tyrant is a ruler of the *polis*, of free men, and that is radically illegitimate. And it was only in the eighteenth century, as far as I know, in Montesquieu and such writers, that the two terms more or less were fused.

Now here he says ruling over willing subjects is something divine that is given to those who have been truly initiated into the mysteries of moderation. Presumably one who possesses breeding and a good nature can become truly initiated into these mysteries, but not all men so initiated receive the reward of *actually* becoming rulers over willing subjects. Therefore that is an addition for which one can hope or pray, but which does not necessarily follow, and which therefore is traced to the gods. Exercising tyrannical rule over *unwilling* subjects is no less a divine gift than ruling over willing subjects. But ruling over unwilling subjects is given, as it seems to Ischomachus, to those whom the gods regard as worthy to live the life of Tantalus in Hades, of whom it is said that he spends unending time in fear that he will die a second time. The myth, or Ischomachus, assumes that people who have died fear dying much more than those who

have not yet died. The tyrant Hiero, in Xenophon's dialogue *Hiero*, asserts that the tyrant spends night and day as if he were condemned by all human beings to die for his injustice. Ischomachus does not speak of the injustice of the tyrant or of the justice of the good ruler. He likewise does not make, as Socrates in the *Memorabilia* does, rule under law or rule without law characteristic of the king on the one hand, and the tyrant on the other.

The previous chapter recommends, as we have seen, the closest approximation to "chrematistics" that is compatible with perfect gentlemanship. The connection with the soil, the land, is not abandoned, not wholly abandoned because it is still land, farms, which are improved by Ischomachus' father. Here, in chapter 21, there is presented as close an approximation to kingship as is compatible with the citizenship in a republic, and after all, Ischomachus is an Athenian citizen. Everyone can see this, in order to understand this, that every city consists of households, and every household is ruled in a *kingly* manner—and therefore it is defensible, this praise of kingly rule.

So now we have finished reading the *Oeconomicus*, and if everything goes well, we will begin next week to read the *Memorabilia*. But now let us first try to have a kind of concluding discussion of the *Oeconomicus*. Yes.

**Student:** Absolutely, the question is why Socrates should be so interested in farming. It seemed that I suppose that there are some parallels in education in trying to implant something in someone and to cultivate something, but I didn't quite see why this particular technique should be of such a great use to Socrates.

**LS:** Ya, but let us assume that there is such an animal as a perfect gentleman, and that his life is based on farming. Then a student of the perfect gentleman would have to know something about farming, and I think some people—and if I'm not mistaken, Marchant, the translator here, too, he tried to understand this very simply. Socrates of course had nothing to do with farming. He was absolutely urban. But Xenophon, after his adventures with Cyrus in Asia Minor, had a farm<sup>12</sup> near Corinth—no, first near Sparta. And he loved farming, and now he also—Xenophon loved farming, and he loved Socrates, and what is simpler than to put the two together [and] present Socrates as a teacher of farming? Well, we have to follow what Xenophon—I mean, Xenophon wasn't a complete idiot, and we must see how it becomes clear from the dialogue itself how the two things are together. That Socrates knew nothing of farming and that he would never become a farmer is clearly said here, so the paradox is a very important part of the whole story. But the paradox goes further, because Socrates' way of life is altogether fundamentally different from that of the gentleman. So you can say Socrates was not a gentleman. But the question you can also say: Is the gentleman a gentleman? This question must be raised. Some people think that only we in our time begin to see the mass of hypocrisy which existed in earlier societies, I mean, the thing called aristocracy was in almost all cases an oligarchy, rule of a clique. Aristotle and Plato and Xenophon knew that. And the question is: Why did they accept it? And one can say generally because they did not see an *alternative* to it. Under the conditions under which they thought there was no possibility of a democracy—and don't say there is Pericles, in Thucydides, the funeral speech, but this was not a democracy as Thucydides himself says. This was the rule of the first man in Athens, so a kind of a monarchy rather than a democracy. That one would have to take into consideration.

**Student:** How does Socrates benefit from his encounter with Ischomachus?

**LS:** He learned what a perfect gentleman is. He learned also—among many other things, he learned also something about the management of wives and of which he was, he had no notion of that very important subject. And when Ischomachus tells him the long story of how he educated his wife—and this may be a bit more complicated, that Ischomachus at that time . . . and now Socrates of course knew that Mrs. Ischomachus was a very bad woman. [But] it was found out only later. That does not contradict what I said.

**Student:** Yeah, but—I’m not making myself very clear, but why do you understand the meeting to be crucial?

**LS:** Here Socrates was a man who did not know what the gentleman is. He had never met one knowingly, as is made clear. On the other hand, he had the reputation of being a fellow who measures the air, a physiologist, as the Greeks would say. And now, for one reason or the other, perhaps because of what Aristophanes did to him in the *Clouds*, he was eager to find out something about these ignoramuses among whom he lived and among whom the perfect gentleman was regarded as the most respectable. And so he looked around and where to find one, and he was—that he tells in chapter six—he first thought the perfect gentleman is *kalos k’agathos*: noble, beautiful, and good. So first he looked for a beautiful man, and they in many cases proved to be not good, and so he decided not to go by sight but by hearing, who is *called* “perfect gentleman” in an emphatic sense, and then everything pointed to Ischomachus. And so by a piece of good fortune, Ischomachus <sup>13</sup>was at leisure sitting in the cloister of the temple, and Socrates caught this opportunity and asked quite frankly, quite directly: What do you do so that you are called a perfect gentleman? And Ischomachus was flattered and laughed at it, and laughed about the naïveté of Socrates’ question, and then he gave him this account. And so Socrates learned the main points about gentlemanship, and not a negligible part of it is farming, for this reason: because farming is an art, as was said more than once, which requires the *least* intellectual effort, and Socrates was very much interested in the intellect and intellectual efforts, and so, and while requiring the least intellectual effort, it contributed *more* than any other art to a good character, according to Ischomachus. And that was very interesting, that there is such a thing which seems to show that virtue has nothing to do with knowledge, an art which does not make any demands on the intellect is most conducive to good character, [is] I think an interesting phenomenon.

**Student:** Yeah, but see, it still isn’t clear to me why such reflections would lead one away from being, from returning, say, in disgust to being a physiologist again and toward reflection on human things.

**LS:** Ya. Perhaps this was only the first step; then Socrates saw that there are other possibilities, and also, really, more complicated, in these ephemeral beings as Aristophanes’ Socrates called and studied them. This is only the beginning, and I believe, as I said when we started that reading, that this dialogue is *the* Socratic discourse written by Xenophon for this reason: because it gives an account of Socrates’ *turning* from physiology to the study of human things. How he deepened that study, that is not said here, it is only the beginning. And the connection with the

physiology is indicated by the fact that a large subject here is farming, the art of farming, plants, and *phyta*, things growing from the earth, which has the same root as the word *physis*, so that Socrates' interest in *physis* in a strange way survives here in his interest, if only short-lived, in farming.

**Student:** Yeah, but wouldn't you have to show in addition that such a reflection on such a man as Ischomachus wouldn't lead to thinking that maybe your former way of life was better? That is, if the gentleman turns out to be rather empty, why wouldn't—it's not clear to me how that would lead <sup>14</sup>away from his former pursuit.

**LS:** Ya. Well, the account of this is given in the *Memorabilia*, and there we have Socrates as the normal, normal in the full sense of the word, not only average, but normal, the normal citizen, you know, which he is not yet here. And this is the further development. But the first stage was in Xenophon's presentation at any rate, was this, <sup>15</sup>the conversation with Ischomachus.

**Student:** I still don't see why the first stage isn't the last stage. I mean, I still don't see why—I mean, it's not clear to me what there is in the kinds of things that Ischomachus says that would open up new paths instead of closing the doors.

**LS:** Perhaps Socrates was dissatisfied independently of Ischomachus with his former physiology.

**Student:** Yeah, but then I would be hesitant to say that—if that were the case, I would be more hesitant at least to say that the meeting with Ischomachus was crucial, if he were already dissatisfied.

**LS:** Ya, but this was—here he does not raise the question what is virtue. He does not even raise the question what is perfect gentlemanship. That develops out of it. The beginning was simply when he turned out of his think-tank, if we use the Aristophanean emblem, when he turned to these ignoramuses, the first thing which he met or heard of was the perfect gentleman and, in particular, this particular perfect gentleman, Ischomachus. And he went further . . . and there were other men, more interesting men—I mean, not merely intellectually interesting, whom he tried to understand. For instance, Themistocles; in another way, Alcibiades, but these were also on the other hand marginal cases. They both became traitors of Athens, we must remember. And Ischomachus is a *normal* gentleman, normal now in the ordinary sense of the word normal. Yes?

**Student:** Are you suggesting that this discussion of farming is not merely the temporal beginning of Socrates' new life but also the beginning in the sense of a foundation?

**LS:** In a way, yes. I mean, that is here presented in a comical form. I believe I said once that this is a reply to Aristophanes' comedy, a reply which is not free altogether from comical traits. For instance, when Ischomachus tells him of how he has established order in the house and taught his wife—I mean, an order among the pots and pans, among other things, dividing all implements of the house into tribes or classes—that foreshadows Socrates' interest in the division of the natural things into tribes, into classes. And that is the meaning of the "what is?" questions which became characteristic of Socrates. And there were some more things of which I do not think of at the

moment which I pointed out on the occasions. Yes, this is a seminal conversation, but in the element of comedy. We must not take it too narrowly, too literally.

**Student:** Would it be fair to say that if we were to take this and try to put it somewhere among the dialogues, we might put it somewhere between the *Parmenides* and the *Statesman*?

**LS:** How come?

**Student:** Because the physiology, or the thing that Aristophanes speaks of Socrates doing in the *Clouds*, seems to me is a kind of . . . for what Socrates is really doing, and Aristophanes is making fun of is a kind of metaphysics of the interesting, the word, that is demonstrated in some of the dialogues like the *Theaetetus* and the *Parmenides*; and the other part of Socrates' interest is in men, in human beings, as in the *Republic* and perhaps in the *Statesman*. There seems to be a turning to politics.

**LS:** No, it is not likely. Are you speaking now of the Socrates presented by Aristophanes?

**Student:** No, I'm just wondering if you said that there's a turning point in this document, in this work, the *Oeconomicus*, from physiology to human study.

**LS:** Yes, but in order to see the turning point as a turning point, we have to know the beginning of the way and the end of it. Now, if we take as the beginning the Aristophanean Socrates, he does two things: physiology in the Greek sense of the word, and *rhetoric*, rhetoric that includes grammar, you know. You know that. Good. And then you brought up Plato. I do not see where the *Statesmen* comes in, but there is one Platonic dialogue which speaks explicitly of Socrates' youthful concern with physiology, and that is the *Phaedo*. On the day of his death, that is the only occasion on which the Platonic Socrates speaks of that, when he was no longer exposed to the *polis*—I mean because he was already condemned to death. In that situation he mentions it. Now if one can raise this question: How is this theme followed up in Plato? I mean, how Socrates *became* the Socrates whom we all know, by starting from this beginning; and I believe that one would find <sup>16</sup>a further stage indicated in the *Parmenides*, [where] Socrates is very young but has no longer anything to do with physiology, but—and then one could perhaps also think of the *Banquet*, where Socrates is taught, in the position of a pupil, by Diotima things which are not always taught. But where the *Statesmen* should come in, I don't see. In Xenophon, that is surely the only work which one could consider.

**Mr. Berns:** There is a certain sense in which part of what you described, namely Socrates' becoming aware of a non-intellectual component in virtue, reminds one a little bit of what Kant said about being set straight by Rousseau.

**LS:** Ya, and—

**Mr. Berns:** Well, that Rousseau had set him straight; that before he had studied Rousseau he thought that the only worth of a man is in terms of what he could know and understand about the world, and he learned on the other hand from Rousseau that the most important thing about all

men is having a good will, that the most ordinary, unknowing man is on a par maybe better or worse than the wisest philosophers.

**LS:** Yes, but those are different cases, ya? I mean, you don't mean that Rousseau is another kind of Ischomachus.

**Mr. Berns:** No. [Laughter]

**LS:** And especially here, the case is that Socrates seeks out Ischomachus. Rousseau—Kant doesn't in this way seek out Rousseau. Rousseau happened to him and that had its effect. I don't see how—

**Mr. Berns:** Well, but the need for powerful minds to learn about what might be the non-intellectual side of virtue seemed to be with it.

**LS:** Ya, but in this meeting of Kant with Rousseau and of what Kant says about it, there is not the slightest trace of comedy.

**Mr. Berns:** Of what?

**LS:** Of comedy, ya? And here there is. I believe that these are very different cases.

**Student:** What were the results of some of the Marxian analysis of Socrates which you mentioned?

**LS:** Ya, I remember only a man called, was he Farrington, or someone else? He wrote however, whoever it was, in the late thirties, at that time I read these things, ya, and of course Plato and Aristotle, that is just an ideology, as they call it, of the upper class, ya? Of the upper class. But then there is the awkward thing, that Socrates, *poor* Socrates presents the same view, fundamentally the same view, I mean the same "quote "aristocratic view." And then these people said, or one of these people [said] that yes, Socrates came from the common people but then he climbed. He made himself useful to people like Crito, a wealthy farmer, and other people of this kind, and they took care of him financially, and then Socrates' his interest was now with the ruling class. That's very simple. I believe it is not practical to begin a new subject now, but we still have some time. Some questions or objections? Yes?

**Student:** In the last paragraph, at the end, when you were talking about the two *nomizeins* . . .

**LS:** Which part, did you say?

**Student:** Where you were speaking about the two *nomizeins*.

**LS:** Oh, *nomizō*. That's the end of chapter 20.

**Student:** Yes, chapter 20. . .



**LS:** I see. That is the concluding remark of Socrates regarding Ischomachus' attempt to trace his father's particular care for farming to his love of farming, ya? And Socrates discovers that it is not different from what any other merchant does, you know? He takes the example of grain merchants, but he could take any other. So in this the motive is gain. And the final remark is in this sentence. "I say," Ischomachus, he swore by saying that. I believe that people *believe*, by nature, that they love that from which they *believe* to be benefited. There are *two* delusions there: the delusion regarding love, and the delusion regarding being benefited. And Xenophon mentions somewhere the case of a tyrant in a Greek city who was regarded as a benefactor by the people, and the people were unable to distinguish between a benefactor and a good man.<sup>iv</sup> He gave them all kinds of things which they liked to have, and that is the case here, that they believe to love the people by whom they are only benefited. But then the second thought which comes: they are not truly benefited, they only believe to be benefited. What is the difficulty?

**Student:** I just didn't hear you clearly.

**LS:** I see. Did you hear me now?

**Student:** Yes.

**Different Student:** I didn't hear what you said before to Mr. Anderson over there when you were talking about the origin of the "what is?" question. I just don't see the origin of that question to Socrates from this dialogue.

**LS:** Well, seeing the *order* in this very *homely* example of the household implements, Socrates wondered whether this notion of order does not have a universal significance.

**Student:** Have a . . . ?

**LS:** *Universal significance.* And here the key point is this: the order is based on the division of things into tribes or kinds, into species, you can say. And that is, that is a specific notion of order, which is particularly clear indeed in these homely examples. [But] what Socrates seems to suggest is that this applies universally, when he raises the question "what is, say, courage? That means: What is courage in contradistinction to moderation, for instance, or to wisdom. Division, separation.

**Student:** See, what puzzles me is, I would think that—maybe wrongly, but I would think that it wouldn't be necessary to have met Ischomachus in order to have seen some kind of order, even in nature, by the way, or even in mathematics or heaven knows what, so that one who lived, it seems to me that there would be an abundance of ways such that the mind that's alive could come up with asking "what is it?" in the most serious and basic way. It's hard for me to see that it would be necessary to come in contact with Ischomachus.

**LS:** Ya, but then you forget some other things, [like]<sup>17</sup> the whole question of farming, which plays such a role in the *Clouds*. A farmer comes to Socrates and <sup>18</sup>becomes in a way his pupil,

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<sup>iv</sup>*Hellenica*, xxx.

and this farmer has a good-for nothing-son; and so a reply requires a diametrically opposite solution where Socrates is not the *teacher* of farmers, but the *pupil* of a farmer, and where the farmer is not despised by his son but, rather, where this farmer admires his father. You have to take this also into consideration. There is one *bios*, one way of life, which includes all of these things, because the physiology plus rhetoric means also a destruction of paternal authority. A destruction of paternal authority. And then you have the opposite: no physiology and no rhetoric, but gentlemanship and farming. And—

[end of tape]

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<sup>1</sup> Deleted “here”

<sup>2</sup> Deleted “the main”

<sup>3</sup> Deleted “have”

<sup>4</sup> Deleted “laying”

<sup>5</sup> Deleted “this”

<sup>6</sup> Deleted “Memorabilia”

<sup>7</sup> Deleted “are”

<sup>8</sup> Deleted “you”

<sup>9</sup> Deleted “many”

<sup>10</sup> Deleted “than by his strength”

<sup>11</sup> Deleted “only”

<sup>12</sup> Deleted “in”

<sup>13</sup> Deleted “was sitting at”

<sup>14</sup> Deleted “toward”

<sup>15</sup> Deleted “was”

<sup>16</sup> Deleted “a certain”

<sup>17</sup> Deleted “that”

<sup>18</sup> Deleted “wishes”

## Session 8: no date

**Leo Strauss:** [in progress] —that would be also more interesting than the *Oeconomicus*. At least we do not have to wade through the art of farming, of which most of us know nothing, and still less about the Greeks' farming. Now we begin here with the question of the *title* because the title is a question. The book has frequently been quoted in both ancient and modern times, *Memorabilia*—"the Recollections of Socrates," but the Greek has only "Recollections." Even that is not quite—the term used by Xenophon—*Apomnēmoneumata*—is derivative from the word *apomnēmoneuō*, which occurs only once in the whole *Memorabilia*, and there it means to resent, to bear a grudge, and this is funny as a title of this book. But I cannot conceal from you this fact: the more important or more obvious difficulty is that the name of Socrates is absent. Xenophon uses the name of Socrates in a title only in the *Apology of Socrates*, just as Plato . . . to repeat that the title is silent about the fact that the book contains recollections of Socrates and only of Socrates. Recollections would seem to be a proper title for another work of Xenophon, which he entitled "Cyrus' Going-Up," *Kurou anabasis*. And that is a description of the younger Cyrus' attempt to become king of Persia, to go up to the interior from the coast, and then [of] what happened to the Greek mercenaries, one of whom was Xenophon, who formed of a part of Cyrus' army. So the bulk of the book is devoted—let's say five of seven Books—is devoted to the *way down* of the Greeks to the coast. But <sup>1</sup>the natural title would be simply "Recollections," because the book consists chiefly of deeds and speeches of Xenophon himself.

There is another book title of Xenophon which is strange, and that is that of the *Education of Cyrus*, his longest book. The *Education of Cyrus* is the theme at most of the first Book. The other seven Books deal with the achievements, or non-achievements, of Cyrus, and that can only be stretched to belong to the education of Cyrus. But in the case of the *Education of Cyrus*, it is clear what the title means. It draws our attention to the education of Cyrus, as happens in the first Book, as the key to Cyrus' tremendous successes. Now, as for the *Memorabilia*, the title would make sense under one and only one condition: that Xenophon's recollections *par excellence* are his recollections of Socrates. In other words, if his being together with Socrates and not with other people was the most important event in his life. And <sup>2</sup>that is borne out by the *Memorabilia*, especially by the epilogue, that this was the case. Now this much about the title. And now let us turn to the beginning, right to the beginning. I see Mr. Williamson. Are you willing?

**Reader:** "I have often wondered by what arguments those who drew up the indictment against Socrates could persuade the Athenians that his life was forfeit to the state. The indictment against him was to this effect: *Socrates is guilty of rejecting the gods acknowledged by the state and of bringing in strange deities: he is also guilty of corrupting the youth.*" (I.I.1)

**LS:** Ya, it begins in the original very massively with the word[s] "many times frequently." "Many times I wondered by what speeches the accusers of Socrates persuaded the Athenians that Socrates was guilty of death at the hand of the city. . . . He also commits an unjust act by corrupting the young." For the accusation regarding him was roughly like this, was about this: Socrates commits an unjust act by not believing in, worshipping the gods which the city worships, obviously, but bringing in *other* divinities which are new. He also commits an unjust

act by corrupting the young. By some accident, the original text of the charge against Socrates has been preserved, and what one sees <sup>3</sup>by comparing Xenophon's not-literal quotation with the text, one sees that Xenophon makes only one slight change. The original said that Socrates, literally translated, leads in, *eisēgoumenos*, other divinities;<sup>i</sup> and Xenophon says, if you translate quite literally, *carries* in other divinities, which . . . . When Plato's Socrates quotes the indictment in the *Apology of Socrates*, he makes much greater change: Socrates commits an unjust act by corrupting the young and by not worshipping, believing in the gods which the city worships, but other divinities which are new. New is emphatically put at the end there. So the order is entirely reversed: first, the corruption of the young, and then the not believing in the gods of the city. This difference between Xenophon and Plato [on] this point—Xenophon's change almost unnoticeable, and Plato's very considerable—is representative of the two writers. Now, then Xenophon goes on after the quote of the indictment, to refute it, and he refutes it by following its order: first the impiety charge, as we may call it; and then the corruption charge. Let us then first turn to the next paragraph.

**Reader:** “First then, that he rejected the gods acknowledged by the state — what evidence did they produce of that? He offered sacrifices constantly, and made no secret of it, now in his home, now at the altars of the state temples, and he made use of divination with as little secrecy. Indeed it had become notorious that Socrates claimed to be guided by ‘the deity’”— (I.I.2)

**LS:** Ya, but let us—we must here say that “the daimonion.” We should really call it the daimonion. Yes?

**Reader:** “it was out of this claim, I think, that the charge of bringing in strange daimonia arose. He was no more bringing in anything strange than are other believers in divination, who rely on augury, oracles, coincidences or sacrifices. For these men's belief is not that the birds or the folk met by accident know what profits the inquirer, but that they are the instruments by which the gods make this known; and it was Socrates' belief too. Only, whereas most men say that the birds or the folk they meet dissuade or encourage them, Socrates said what he meant: for he said that the daimonion gave him a sign.” (I.I.2-4)

**LS:** Let us stop here first. Now first it is made clear that Socrates was perfectly all right as far as sacrificing was concerned. And the second point concerns divination, and here Socrates *did* deviate from the other Athenians, but not fundamentally. He only was more thoughtful than they. They said, for example, the birds give them signs, and if they would have been a little bit more thoughtful, they would have said that the gods give them signs through the birds. And so Socrates said that the god, the divine, gives him signs. Yes, so <sup>4</sup>regarding divination there is a slight difference, then, between Socrates and the general practice of the Athenians, but as Xenophon contends, no difference regarding the fundamentals. Yes?

**Reader:** “Many of his companions were counselled by him to do this or not to do that in accordance with the warnings of the deity: and those who followed his advice prospered, and those who rejected it had cause for regret. And yet who would not admit that he wished to appear neither a knave nor a fool to his companions? but he would have been thought both, had he

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<sup>i</sup> See Diogenes Laertius, “Socrates,” in *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*, Sec. 40.

proved to be mistaken when he alleged that his counsel was in accordance with divine revelation. Obviously, then, he would not have given the counsel if he had not been confident that what he said would come true. And who could have inspired him with that confidence but a god? And since he had confidence in the gods, how can he have disbelieved in the existence of the gods?" (I.1.4-6)

**LS:** Ya. So this point which Xenophon makes here is clear. Socrates could not have talked of the daimonion as he did and made predictions of what would happen to people if they obeyed or disobeyed the daimonion if he had not *believed*. But who knows these things? Only a god. And Socrates *trusted* the gods, and hence he believed that the gods are. This is a very good and beautiful argument, <sup>5</sup>only Socrates had not been accused of atheism but of questioning or not believing in the gods of the *city*, and this of course would not follow from what Xenophon says here. Yes?

**Reader:** "Another way he had of dealing with intimate friends was this: if there was no room for doubt, he advised them to act as they thought best; but if the consequences could not be foreseen, he sent them to the oracle to inquire whether the thing ought to be done." (I.1.6-7)

**LS:** Ya. Now, the word which he translates by "intimate friends," in Greek *epitēdeious*, the question is: Are these the same people as the companions to whom Socrates talked about this daimonion? The word—that is, I think Xenophon speaks nowhere else of the *epitēdeious* of Socrates, except here—the word is not the common word for friends, which is *philoí*, but it has a more "quote *utilité*": the man suitable or helpful, but the element of affection is not here. It is used with particular frequency by Crito in Plato's *Crito*, and also at the beginning of the *Phaedo*. Now, so one doesn't know, then. That is a question, are the *epitēdeious* the same as the companions or are they different? In this case, in the case of these *epitēdeious*, Socrates did not use, speak of his daimonion, but he sent them to the *oracles*, to the publicly recognized oracles. There is only one case known to us in which Socrates did that, and that is the case of Xenophon himself. Xenophon <sup>6</sup>was not sure whether he could go, whether he should go, to Cyrus for his expedition against the King of Persia, and Socrates couldn't give him advice. Socrates' daimonion, we may say, was silent because the Athenians might not have liked that an Athenian citizen goes on that expedition. And Socrates said, therefore: Go to Delphi and ask the god whether it is advisable to go there. Now Xenophon went to Delphi and asked the god to which god should he sacrifice in order to make the expedition with Cyrus profitable. And when he came back to Socrates, Socrates said: You have decided to go there, you have not asked the god for his opinion, but after you have received this reply, you have to obey the god; at least sacrifice to the gods whom the gods recommended. That is the only example of Socrates' sending someone to an oracle in Xenophon. The story of the Delphic oracle in Plato's *Apology* is entirely different, because there [it was] not Socrates but Chaerephon who went spontaneously to Delphi, and so Socrates cannot be held responsible for that, yes. And here, as Xenophon indicates earlier in the paragraph which we read, that there is a distinction between the things regarding which one may not ask the gods and the things regarding which one ought to ask the gods. And he develops this further in the sequel. Yes.

**Reader:** "Those who intended to control a house or a city, he said, needed the help of divination. For the craft of carpenter, smith, farmer or ruler, and the theory of such crafts, and arithmetic and

economics and generalship might be learned and mastered by the application of human powers; but the deepest secrets of these matters the gods reserved to themselves—” (1.1.7-8)

**LS:** Now we see here the greatest things, the most important things in these matters.

**Reader:** “You may plant a field well; but you know not who shall gather the fruits: you may build a house well; but you know not who shall dwell in it: able to command, you cannot know whether it is profitable to command: versed in statecraft, you know not whether it is profitable to guide the state: though, for your delight, you marry a pretty woman, you cannot tell whether she will bring you sorrow: though you form a party among men mighty in the state, you know not whether they will cause you to be driven from the state.” (I.1.8-9)

**LS:** So in all these things the most important things are not known. They go beyond the power of the *techne* in question. If someone <sup>7</sup>is a perfect marriage counselor, he knows everything about the subject, he cannot *guarantee* that the marriage which he counsels will be perfect. If someone has perfect control of the strategic art, he does not know whether it will be beneficial for *him* to become general, and the other examples here. Yes?

**Student:** What does Xenophon mean by profitable . . . .

**LS:** Well, for example, he may look at the generals who won the battle at the Arginusae according to all rules of the art, and then they did not pick up the corpses—that was a naval battle—and then they were accused of a heinous crime, and those whom the Athenians could lay their hands on were executed. It was not profitable to them to exercise the art of a general.<sup>8</sup>

**Student:** . . . .

**LS:** I cannot hear what he said.

**Student:** [Inaudible, summarizing other student’s question] . . . profitable doesn’t refer to something non-wealth, does it?

**LS:** Why should it not? If someone is profitable for the improvement of the mind, does this not exist? But surely profitable means something different from what the Greeks call noble, *kalon*, and which corresponds in a very rough way to what we mean by moral, that is true. But the key point is the most important thing in all these matters: men cannot know. Now the question is, the examples Xenophon gives are convincing as far as they go, but he mentioned one thing which had been said, of course, arithmetic but which I . . . well, which is arithmetic in our sense of the word, *logistikē*. But the question is whether regarding arithmetic the gods reserve for themselves the most important matters, whether one would have to go to Delphi in order to make sure of the results of one’s figuring. Only, of course, the question is: Is it wise for a man to become a figurer? This is not settled by the art of figuring itself, that is true. Ya?

**Reader:** “If any man thinks that these matters are wholly within the grasp of the human mind and nothing in them is beyond our reason, that man, he said, is irrational.” (I.1.9)

**LS:** Yes. This word which he uses for irrational is a derivative from *daimon*, *daimonan*. So that is not uninteresting because he speaks in this context of the *daimonion*, yes?

**Reader:** “But it is no less irrational—” How do you want? Just translate it as irrational?

**LS:** Insane, or something.

**Reader:** “It is no less insane to seek the guidance of heaven in matters which men are permitted by the gods to decide for themselves by study: to ask, for instance, Is it better to get an experienced coachman to drive my carriage or a man without experience? Is it better to get an experienced seaman to steer my ship or a man without experience? So too with what we know by reckoning, measurement or weighing. To put such questions to the gods seemed to his mind profane. In short, what the gods have granted us to do by help of learning, we must learn; what is hidden from mortals we should try to find out from the gods by divination: for to him that is in their grace the gods grant a sign.” (I.1.9)

**LS:** Ya. So in the case of divination, we have seen Socrates has a whole *logos* about divination, the main points of which Xenophon sketches here. And here it is made clear, of course, that arithmetic—for example, counting, or measuring, or weighing—these are things which are within man’s power, and quite a few other things which man can know by himself. But others are not. Socrates’ general thesis is a middle way. One should not ask the oracles regarding everything, nor should one ask the gods regarding nothing but regarding some things, and he stated what these things are: the greatest things. One must ask them of the greatest things, the *event* of our doings, that which is greatest. Xenophon has then shown that Socrates, in spite of that minor deviation regarding the *daimonion*—that he spoke of the *daimonion* which other people did not—he was a perfectly normal Athenian and, in particular, that he encouraged the consultation of the oracles. <sup>9</sup>nothing is said to the effect that Socrates *himself* consulted oracles, you would have seen that, and there is no evidence for that, and as for the *daimonion*, he didn’t have to consult it because it made itself noticeable without Socrates’ consulting. So the whole question of Socrates’ piety seems to be settled. Up to a point, up to paragraph five, we could still say that Socrates believed in gods, but this does not mean that he believed in gods of the *city*. Now, what he said about the oracles would seem to prove fully that he worshipped, or respected or recognized, the gods of the city, and therefore the whole impiety charge is unfounded. Nevertheless, Xenophon goes on. Ya?

**Reader:** “Moreover, Socrates lived ever in the open; for early in the morning he went to the public promenades and walking-grounds; in the forenoon he was seen in the market; and the rest of the day he passed just where most people were to be met: he was generally talking, and anyone might listen.” (I.1.10)

**LS:** Ya, now what does this mean? Socrates was always in the open. He was never in private. There is no privacy in Socrates’ life, therefore we cannot know whether he was not impious when he was not in the sight of men. And not only was he always in the open, he also was always talking, or almost always talking, and so there was nowhere a hiding place for any improper things. Xenophon makes it a bit suspicious after having given this complete refutation of the impiety charge that he brings in this additional consideration. Ya?

**Reader:** “Yet none ever knew him to offend against piety and religion in deed or word. He did not even discuss that topic so favoured by other talkers, ‘the Nature of the Universe’: and avoided speculation—” (I.1.10-11)

**LS:** Now that is not quite correct. For he did not *converse* as most of the others—whatever that may mean—take into consideration the nature of all things. More precisely, he did not consider these things *in the manner* in which most others consider it. So there are apparently various ways in which one can consider the nature of things, a pious way and an impious way. And most others, which surely cannot mean most Athenians, but I am afraid would mean most others who could be mistaken as doing the same thing as Socrates, that is to say the sophists. These people investigated the nature of all things in an impious manner. Socrates did it in a pious manner. I’m sorry, I have interrupted. Will you read that again?

**Reader:** “and he avoided speculation on the so-called ‘Cosmos’ of the Sophists, how it works, and on the laws that govern the phenomena of the heavens: indeed he would argue that to trouble one’s mind with such problems is sheer folly. In the first place, he would inquire, did these thinkers suppose that their knowledge of human affairs was so complete that they must seek these new fields for the exercise of their brains; or that it was their duty to neglect human affairs and consider only things divine?” (I.1.11-12)

**LS:** Ya, there is a word which he translated with “divine” is *daimonion*. Previously he had called them *ourania*, heavenly, that’s the same. So this is not really an argument, it is only a question addressed to these other people. Did they know the human things and then turn to the heavenly or divine things, or did they simply disregard the human? And the meaning is: they disregarded it. Yes?

**Reader:** “Moreover, he marveled at their blindness in not seeing that man cannot solve these riddles; since even the most conceited talkers on these problems did not agree in their theories, but behaved to one another like madmen. As some madmen have no fear of danger and others are afraid where there is nothing to be afraid of, so some will do or say anything in a crowd with no sense of shame, while others shrink even from going abroad among men, some respect neither temple nor altar nor any other sacred thing, others worship stocks and stones and beasts, so is it, he held, with those who worry with ‘Universal Nature. Some hold that ‘What is’ is one, others that it is infinite in number; some that all things are in perpetual motion, others that nothing can ever be moved at any time; some that all life is birth and decay, others that nothing can ever be born or ever die.” (I.1.13-15)

**LS:** So that is a new argument, a second argument against these people. They are now accused of *madness*, and what madness this is is described by other examples. Mad people are extremists, we can say, people either who fear everything or who fear nothing. They are all extremists. And there are other examples given. Now this has an important implication. Just as Socrates was not a madman regarding fear or regarding what one could or could not say and do among human beings, so he was not a madman regarding the universe. The madmen said that being is one, or they said that there are infinitely many beings. The sober and sane mean would be: there are many beings, numerable, surveyable, and the same regarding the other points. The madmen say,



“all things are ever in motion,” and the other madmen say, “nothing is ever in motion.” The sane view is, some things are in motion, and some things are never moved, and the same is also true of coming to being and perishing. So there is something which one can call a sober, not mad, a sober and sane cosmology. This is implied, but it is only implied, and one must see whether it has any, whether [there are] any further signs of it in the *Memorabilia* and elsewhere. In reading the *Oeconomicus*, we have spoken about the Ischomachus lecture to his wife on order. This, I have indicated, I believe that this had something to do with what is said here. An order requires a division into kinds, into surveyable or numerable kinds, and a distinction, therefore, between the kinds, which never change and which never come into being, and things which do change and which do come into being and perish.

**Reader:** “Nor were those the only questions he asked about such theorists—” (I.1.15)

**LS:** So that is the third argument.

**Reader:** “Students of human nature, he said—” (I.1.15)

**LS:** No, that was not said, “of human things.” That is something very different from human nature.

**Reader:** “Students of human things, he said, think that they will apply their knowledge in due course for the good of themselves and any others they choose. Do those who pry into heavenly phenomena imagine—” (I.1.15)

**LS:** To divine things. They are not called phenomena.

**Reader:** “Do those who pry into divine things imagine that, once they have discovered the laws by which these are produced, they will create at their will winds, waters, seasons and such things to their need? Or have they no such expectation, and are they satisfied with knowing the causes of these various phenomena?” (I.1.15)

**LS:** So this here, Socrates does not answer the question, but he presupposes an answer. What these people do would make sense if they regarded their knowledge, their science, as a means to human power, for instance, to making winds and waters, and that they obviously do not do, and therefore what they do is in vain. This is one of the very rare classical passages in which the notion of science for the sake of power is hinted at and rejected out of hand. Yes. So that is clear, this is this whole, an important part of the refutation of the impiety charge: Socrates’ study of the nature of all things differed from that of *most* others, that is to say of most other so-called sophists. Ya?

**Reader:** “Such, then, was his criticism of those who meddle with these matters. His own conversation was ever of human things. The problems he discussed were, What is godly, what is ungodly; what is beautiful, what is ugly; what is just, what is unjust; what is prudence, what is madness; what is courage, what is cowardice; what is a state, what is a statesman; what is government, and what is a governor;—these and others like them, of which the knowledge made

a ‘gentleman,’ in his estimation, while ignorance should involve the reproach of ‘slavishness.’” (I.1.16)

**LS:** Now these fourteen examples of Socrates’ concern which Xenophon gives here, and which are all *human* things, you see how inappropriate it is to speak here of human nature, and in the center we find *sophrosyne* and *manía*, which I would translate moderation and madness. You can also say sobriety, but I believe prudence would not be a good translation. Now the difficulty here is this: Socrates *always* conversed, about these things by raising the “What is?” question regarding them. Now, in the *Memorabilia*, we find at most three chapters in which Socrates does this. And this is again a characteristic of Xenophon, in particular, of the *Memorabilia*, that Xenophon points to something of the utmost importance but does not present it. We must keep in mind, as you will see for many chapters, perhaps for many chapters, let’s say when Socrates gives advice to a poor friend, what he can do in order to get out of his financial troubles, that is not a “What is?” question. That applies to most other conversations we find in this work. So Xenophon had pointed *almost* to that sober cosmology. He points more emphatically to Socrates’ concern with the “What is?” question, questions regarding the human things. But both themes are not developed, and we must keep that in mind.

**Student:** I was wondering, is there a certain unevenness in the list, the first five pairs are contraries, and then the sixth pair and the seventh pair changes . . . noble, base, just, unjust, moderate, and then, courage, cowardice, what it is a *polis* and what is a *politikos*—

**LS:** Ya. You are quite right. But in the first five cases, one cannot think of the one without thinking of its opposite, but this is apparently possible in the four last cases. No? “What is rule over human beings?”, this is something different from “What is a statesman?”, because rule over human beings, you’ll find also within the household, yeah, or say in an empire, as distinguished from a city. And then what is a man capable to rule, *fit* to rule human beings, is of course something different than “What is rule over human beings?” Yes?

**Student:** And now in this passage he uses, he says, talking about what is a—knowledge makes men, knowledge is what makes a man a gentleman, according to Xenophon, and I’d like to know what the right word, especially if one compares this with gentlemen, to what we talked about . . . in the *Oeconomicus*.

**LS:** Yes, that is true, but perhaps gentleman is an ambiguous term. It can mean men like Ischomachus, a good citizen, a respected and respectable citizen who is a farmer and does his duty by the city and so on. But it can also mean something else. A gentleman is a man who *knows* the “What is?” of the human things. And in this sense clearly Ischomachus is not a gentleman, but Socrates would be a gentleman. Maybe there are more kinds of gentleman, but these are probably the most important ones. And in the *Oeconomicus*, of course, Socrates’ gentlemanship is in no way presented. That we find here, and especially in this context. Ya.

**Reader:** “So, in pronouncing on opinions of his that were unknown to them it is not surprising that the jury erred: but is it not astonishing that they should have ignored matters of common knowledge?” (I.1.17-18)

**LS:** So this is again a further corrective of what he had said before. All the previous things regarding Socrates' sacrificing and using divination and his peculiar kind of studying nature, this was not universally or not even generally known, and therefore it is understandable that the jury made a mistake and believed the accusers. And therefore Xenophon brings in now a *final* argument, and this, which should clinch the whole issue because it is something which all knew, and which by itself is sufficient proof of Socrates' piety. Yes.

**Reader:** "For instance, when he was on the council and had taken the counsellor's oath—"(I.1.18)

**LS:** No "for instance," that is an addition of Marchant, there is no instance except this.

**Reader:** "and had taken the counsellor's oath by which he bound himself to give counsel in accordance with the laws, it fell to his lot to preside in the Assembly when the people wanted to condemn Thrasyllus and Erasinides and their colleagues to death by a single vote. That was illegal, and he refused the motion in spite of popular rancour and the threats of many powerful persons. It was more to him that he should keep his oath than that he should humour the people in an unjust demand and shield himself from threats. For, like most men—" (I.1.18-19)

**LS:** Yes, so that is the proof, *the* proof of Socrates' piety: that he refused to act against his oath, um, in the trial of the generals at the Arginusae. This same action of Socrates is discussed later on in the *Memorabilia* in Book 4, chapter four as an act of Socrates' *justice*, as distinguished from his piety. And so the proof is not so absolutely convincing as it is meant to be. Yes?

**Reader:** "For, like most men, indeed, he believed that the gods are heedful of mankind, but with an important difference; for whereas they do not believe in the omniscience of the gods, Socrates thought that they know all things, our words and deeds and secret purposes; that they are present everywhere, and grant signs to men of all that concerns man." (I.1.19)

**LS:** This is meant here to show why Socrates kept his oath, because the gods are, know everything, they know also the secret thoughts. But this was the third and final part of the refutation of the impiety charge. And from this it follows that the argument presented in paragraphs 10-16, about Socrates' not impiously engaging in the study of the universe, that this was the central part of the refutation. Ya?

**Reader:** "I wonder, then, how the Athenians can have been persuaded that Socrates was a freethinker—" (I.1.20)

**LS:** Now "that Socrates was not sound regarding the gods" would be better.

**Reader:** "when he never said or did anything contrary to sound religion, and his utterances about the gods and his behavior towards them were the words and actions of a man who is truly religious and deserves to be thought so." (I.1.20)

**LS:** Ya, Xenophon had first drawn our attention to a tripartition: saying, doing, and silently deliberating. And now he speaks only of saying and doing, and one can of course say what was

going on in Socrates' mind, and only in Socrates' mind, could not be known to anyone, to the accusers as little as to Xenophon himself, but one wonders. And let us only read now the beginning of the next chapter.

**Reader:** "No less wonderful is it to me that some believed the charge brought against Socrates of corrupting the youth." (I.2.1)

**LS:** Ya, let us stop there. Regarding the impiety charge, the Athenians were persuaded. Regarding the corruption charge, only *some* were persuaded. And the strange thing is, that though the impiety charge was so much more credible, Xenophon devotes to it very little space . . . whereas he devotes at least twice as much space to the much less credible, the refutation of the much less credible corruption charge. Now before we turn to chapter two, I would like to find out whether there are any points which you would like to discuss.

**Student:** I'd like to ask, were Socrates' sacrifices and various acts of justice so well known that it really was surprising that the Athenians were persuaded of the impiety?

**LS:** Well, could not someone do this sacrifice as a matter of decency, of propriety, without truly worshiping the gods? Xenophon is very, very brief about Socrates' sacrificing. You see only this single sentence. He takes it up again later, but again very briefly. The sacrificing proves nothing. The divination proves something in the way in which the *daimonion*, that this can be taken to prove that Socrates believed in *gods*, but what about the gods of the city? And Xenophon establishes that Socrates believes in the gods of the city by Socrates' sending people to the public oracles, but he himself never went there, and we have only one example of Socrates sending others, that is the example of sending Xenophon, which is not too impressive as a proof of simple piety. So the main point would then be the central argument here: Socrates' refusal to engage in the investigation of the necessities, by which the heavenly phenomena—lightening, thunder, and so on—come into being. But who knew of that, at any rate, as Xenophon himself says? Who knew of that, that Socrates . . . only those who were rather familiar with him. And so therefore Xenophon comes then back finally to an argument which had nothing to do with Socrates' private conversations, but with his single *public* action at the trial of the generals. Ya?

**Student:** The question of the omniscience of the gods of Socrates, as opposed to the rest of the Athenians remains . . . . Is that a new idea of the gods?

**LS:** I do not understand your question.

**Student:** He says that whereas most men don't believe in the omniscience of the gods, Socrates did.

**LS:** Oh, Yes, I'm sorry. Ya. Ya, ya! Ya, Xenophon doesn't say that it is new. He only says it is different from what the *many* believe, ya? The assertions that the gods know everything occurs in Homer and everywhere else, so that is not new, but the many think they know, the gods know only some things. The striking thing is here that in this particular point, Socrates has a kind of an extreme view, you know?, whereas <sup>10</sup>previously these were all moderate views. One could believe that the gods know nothing, or that the gods know everything, and in the middle would

be the view that the gods know some things. And at this point, as I said, Socrates takes the extreme.

**Student:** I have trouble reconciling that Socrates believed in one supreme being, as in the *Republic*, with the claim here that he honored all the gods. There's some confusion as [to], in my mind, how Xenophon looked at it and how Socrates himself looked at it.

**LS:** I'm sorry. Can you?

**Mr. Williamson:** He has difficulty reconciling the implication in the *Republic* that Socrates recognized only one god with the fact that he is said to sacrifice here to many gods.

**LS:** Ya, but in the first place, you can say Plato is not Xenophon; and in the second place, how often does this Platonic Socrates speak of gods? And <sup>11</sup>where does Plato in the *Republic* say that there is only one god? Does he say this explicitly?

**Student:** I just happened to remember about the . . . of the First Book . . .

**LS:** Ya, there it would be, but does he say—he speaks frequently there of *the* god, but does he say that there is only a single god? I do not remember, I may be mistaken. I don't believe that there would be a difference in this.

**Student:** May I come back to Xenophon's notion of the gentleman? On the one hand, the farmer is a gentleman—

**LS:** The gentleman farmer.

**Student:** The gentleman farmer, which I understand because he rules men, he participates in the state, he is a good citizen. I can also understand in a way how an educated man can be also a gentleman, but that Socrates is a gentleman, this I cannot understand because a man who goes around—

[break in tape]

**LS:** —on our attention or respect than love, and erotic love. This might seem to be the primary theme.

**Student:** . . .

**LS:** Yes, we know that, but he does the same in Xenophon—I know, not as powerful as in Plato. But again, what is not always in these statements, in the Platonic statements as well as the Xenophontic statements, a connection between *eros* and virtue? And is not in this context virtue primary because—or say, the noble—because in this case alone you can distinguish between the right kind of *eros* and the wrong kind? If someone would say *eros* is a primary theme of the Platonic Socrates, overriding all others, I think he would have to make clear how and why the subject *eros* could absorb the subject virtue. Now, Mr. Brown?

**Mr. Brown:** Wouldn't you say there is a kind of very empty formula that one could make that love of the good would be to equate love of [and] virtue?

**LS:** Ya, but would not the question—<sup>12</sup>this would have to be established, would it not? And we would have to place a question regarding the ambiguity of love.

**Mr. Brown:** Of the good?

**LS:** No, love also, also noble and base. So I think that it would be combined.

**Mr. Williamson:** There's another omission in that list that strikes me. He asks "What's just?", "What's moderate?", "What is courage?" He doesn't ask "What is wisdom?" or "What is knowledge?", which is a question that might be asked in a group of natural scientists or mathematicians.

**LS:** Yes, but Socrates is not a natural scientist, that was made clear. And knowledge comes up immediately, the knowers of these "What is?", "What is?", are the gentlemen, the knowers. And so to that extent, the question of wisdom is here not only raised but even answered: wisdom is knowledge of these "What is?" Let us go on with that in the beginning of the chapter.

**Reader:** "No less wonderful is it to me that some believed the charge brought against Socrates of corrupting the youth. In the first place, apart from what I have said, in control of his own passions and appetites he was the strictest of men; further, in enduring cold and heat and every kind of toil he was most resolute; and besides, his needs were so schooled to moderation that having very little he was yet very content. Such was his own character: how then can he have led others into impiety, crime, gluttony, lust, or sloth?" (I.2.1-2)

**LS:** So here, this is perhaps not precisely enough translated, that Socrates who *in addition* to what was said—here, in addition to his piety—was of extreme continence and endurance, and therefore how could he have corrupted anyone? Yes?

**Reader:** "On the contrary, he cured these vices in many, by putting into them a desire for goodness, and by giving them confidence that self-discipline would make them gentlemen. To be sure he never professed to teach this; but, by letting his own light shine, he led his disciples to hope that they through imitation of him would attain to such excellence." (I.2.2-4)

**LS:** But by being manifestly such a one, the perfect gentleman, he made those who conversed with him hope that by imitating him, they would become such ones, namely, perfect gentlemen. So Socrates was not, did not propose to be a teacher of virtue. That's the first time that the word teacher or teaching occurs here, because the corruption charge—that is also made clear in Plato's *Apology*—refers to what Socrates taught: he corrupted people by *teaching*. And now here the first answer we get here is that he did not claim to be a *teacher* of virtue; he just was virtuous. And he "quote taught unquote" virtue by his example, not by teaching. Yes?

**Reader:** “Furthermore, he himself never neglected the body, and reproved such neglect in others. Thus over-eating followed by over-exertion he disapproved. But he approved of taking as much hard exercise as is agreeable to the soul; for the habit not only insured good health, but did not hamper the care of the soul. On the other hand, he disliked foppery and pretentiousness in the fashion of clothes or shoes or in behaviour. Nor, again, did he encourage love of money in his companions. For while he checked their other desires, he would not make money himself out of their desire for his companionship. He held that this self-denying ordinance insured his liberty. Those who charged a fee for their society he denounced for selling themselves into bondage; since they were bound to converse with all from whom they took the fee.” (I.2.4-7)

**LS:** So that means Socrates was not bound to converse with everyone. Socrates could *choose* his interlocutors, and that is of some importance. It is in some tension to what he said before, that Socrates talked in public like a stump orator and everyone who wished could listen. That is one side of Socrates; the other is that Socrates made a selection <sup>13</sup>of people regarding companionship. Ya?

**Reader:** “He marvelled that anyone should make money by the profession of virtue, and should not reflect that his highest reward would be the gain of a good friend; as though he who became a true gentleman could fail to keep deep gratitude for a benefit so great. Socrates indeed never promised any such boon to anyone; but he was confident that those of his companions who adopted his principles of conduct would throughout life be good friends to him and to one another. How, then, could such a man ‘corrupt the youth’? Unless, perchance, it be corruption to foster virtue.” (I.2.7-8)

**LS:** Ya. So this is the general refutation of the corruption charge. A man of especially the continence and endurance—because corrupting could also be understood in the crudest and coarsest manner, that Socrates corrupted the morals of the young people, and that is also by implication excluded and everything. Socrates, a perfectly virtuous man, could not corrupt anyone, that is established. But now we hear a counterargument.

**Reader:** “But, said his accuser, he taught his companions to despise the established laws by insisting on the folly of appointing public officials by lot, when none would choose a pilot or builder or flautist by lot, nor any other craftsman for work in which mistakes are far less disastrous than mistakes in statecraft. Such sayings, he argued, led the young to despise the established constitution and made them violent.” (I.2.9)

**LS:** So this is—Xenophon begins now to quote the accuser. That is, this is not the man who had, not the written indictment, but what the accuser or accusers had said at the trial. And there is a very long literature—in a way, an established fact, as people believe—that this accuser was a sophist called Polycrates, who wrote an accusation of Socrates as a piece of showmanship. Well, I don’t think that anything is known about it, and we should be simple and read it as it is presented. Xenophon presents it <sup>14</sup>in this way, that the accuser, among other things, had made this specific charge: that Socrates corrupted the young by making them look down with contempt on the established laws and even on the established regime. So Socrates was opposed to the *establishment*. That of course was at that time a capital offense. Now, how does Xenophon take care of this?

**Reader:** “But I hold that they who cultivate wisdom and think they will be able to guide the people in prudent policy never lapse into violence—” (I.2.10)

**LS:** And they all believe to be able to teach the useful things. The word teach here is not unimportant.

**Reader:** “they know that enmities and dangers are inseparable from violence, but persuasion produces the same results safely and amicably. For violence, by making its victims sensible of loss, rouses their hatred: but persuasion, by seeming to confer a favour, wins goodwill. It is not, then, cultivation of wisdom that leads to violent methods, but the possession of power without prudence. Besides, many supporters are necessary to him who ventures to use force: but he who can persuade needs no confederate, having confidence in his own unaided power of persuasion. And such a man has no occasion to shed blood; for who would rather take a man's life than have a live and willing follower?” (I.2.10-11)

**LS:** Ya. Now this, you must have seen that Xenophon does not for one moment deny that Socrates made these subversive speeches regarding election by lot, or that Socrates did not think highly of the established laws and of the established regime. Xenophon takes issue only with the point made by the accuser that Socrates made his companions violent or given to violence, and the latter he denies. And the main point which he makes here is this: that Socrates was the unrivaled master of persuasion, and men who can persuade would never use violence. And <sup>15</sup>in particular, he would not *kill*, for he would use the *living* one, persuaded to obey and to do his bidding. Socrates did engage in subversive speeches but he did not engage in subversive deeds. One can also express what Xenophon says here in this manner. [Socrates],<sup>16</sup> the master persuader, that is a point which will be important for the sequel. Will you please continue?

**Reader:** “But his accuser argued thus. Among the associates of Socrates were Critias and Alcibiades; and none wrought so many evils to the state. For Critias in the days of the oligarchy bore the palm for greed and violence: Alcibiades, for his part, exceeded all in licentiousness and insolence under the democracy.” (I.2.12-13)

**LS:** That is what the accuser said, ya? Now there are—both Critias and Alcibiades were terrible men, but there are slight differences in what way they were terrible. Critias, he says, was in the Oligarchy of all the most thievish, the most violent, and the most murderous. Alcibiades was of *all* men in the democracy, the most incontinent, the most insolent, *hubristotatos*, and the most violent. There are slight differences: Alcibiades is not murderous and thievish, and that <sup>17</sup>is of some importance for the sequel. Now what does Xenophon say?

**Student:** Did we finish with the accuser, or is this Xenophon?

**LS:** The accuser.

**Same student:** How can we be sure?



**LS:** Ya, “but said the accuser,” and then he quotes this sentence, and then at the beginning of paragraph 14 says: “but I.” I mean, the other matter is that we have no means of knowing what the accuser said and who that accuser was—whether he was the man who spoke at the trial or whether he was the man who wrote the pamphlet perhaps years after Socrates’ death, this is beyond . . . but also of no interest. But let us—so the master persuader, that is the key to the following point regarding Critias and Alcibiades. Yes?

**Reader:** “Now I have no intention of excusing the wrong these two men wrought the state; but I will explain how they came to be with Socrates. Ambition was the very life-blood of both: no Athenian was ever like them. They were eager to get control of everything and to outstrip every rival in notoriety. They knew that Socrates was living on very little, and yet was wholly independent; that he was strictly moderate in all his pleasures; and that in argument he could do what he liked with any disputant. Sharing this—” (I.2.13-15)

**LS:** Ya, that is a stronger point, in other words, than what came before. He could use in his speeches all people conversing with him in whatever manner he liked. So the absolute superiority in dialectics.

**Reader:** “Sharing this knowledge and the principles I have indicated, is it to be supposed that these two men wanted to adopt the simple life of Socrates, and with this object in view sought his society? Did they not rather think that by associating with him they would attain the utmost proficiency in speech and action? For my part I believe that, had heaven granted them the choice between the life they saw Socrates leading and death, they would have chosen rather to die. Their conduct betrayed their purpose; for as soon as they thought themselves superior to their fellow-disciples they sprang away from Socrates and took to politics; it was for political ends that they had wanted Socrates.” (I.2.15-16)

**LS:** Ya, so that is a very rare . . . not true associates of Socrates. Now still there must have been something that attracted them to Socrates. That was not Socrates’ extreme continence, this would have repelled them, but the fact that Socrates could handle *everyone* in speeches in whatever manner he liked. And they wanted to become first rate in, not only in acting, but also in speaking, and therefore Socrates <sup>18</sup>became desirable, and therefore they stayed with Socrates for some time. Yes?

**Reader:** “But it may be answered: Socrates should have taught his companions prudence before politics.” (I.2.17)

**LS:** Yes, prudence. The word could be sober, moderate, *sōphroein*.

**Reader:** “I do not deny it; but I find that all teachers show their disciples how they themselves practice what they teach, and lead them on by argument. And I know that it was so with Socrates: he showed his companions that he was a gentleman himself, and talked most excellently of goodness and of all things that concern man. I know further that even those two were prudent so long as they were with Socrates, not from fear of fine or blow, but because at that time they really believed in prudent conduct.” (I.2.17-18)

**LS:** Ya, a fine or blow from Socrates, that Socrates would fine them or beat them. Good. Now there is here one point which is mentioned or admitted by [Xenophon]<sup>19</sup> in passing, that Socrates taught the political things, and that was what attracted, among other men, Critias and Alcibiades. Socrates also <sup>20</sup>conversed most *nobly* about virtue and the other human things. How this is related to his teaching the political things is not clear, and we must gradually see how <sup>21</sup>these two things are related to each other.

**Student:** May I ask you something?

**LS:** Please.

**Student:** It says here that the he would converse not for pay, but he conversed with youth, with people who would truly converse—in other words, with the youths who are apt to be persuaded . . . with gentlemen. But Xenophon, or Socrates, should have known that Critias and Alcibiades are not good students, he shouldn't have have accepted them—

**LS:** Ya, but still—

**Student:** because he was . . . he was in a position to choose the right youths, not everyone could pay, but with Socrates . . .

**LS:** Ya, let us distinguish. They must have had certain recommendations, not from other people, but in themselves. I suppose they were both gifted youth and that therefore they were attractive to Socrates. And what would become of them, what would become of them *later*, that is in the hands of the gods. That that one cannot know, and Xenophon will explain that later how it happened that, although they had such an excellent teacher, they became such wicked men. But the main point which Xenophon makes of course is that Socrates cannot be held responsible for their wickedness, because from Socrates they learned only good things. And where they learned the wicked things, Xenophon will say later on.

**Student:** . . . half knowledge . . . the tyant . . .

**LS:** Yes, but in the first place, Critias went away to Thessaly, to people more known for *lawlessness* than for justice, and he was together with them, no longer with Socrates. And Alcibiades was such a favorite, especially of the fair sex but also of men, that he was corrupted <sup>22</sup>by his successes in these fields. Socrates cannot be held responsible for that.

**Student:** . . .

**LS:** Pardon?

**Student:** But they were also corrupted by the half-knowledge.

**LS:** Ya, this you can never help, that is always possible. It happens. I mean, just as even the good opinions maybe they had learned from their parents or guardians, they also could be misused, ya?, so you cannot hold Socrates responsible for that.

**Student:** . . . .

**LS:** Ya, but you cannot do everything at the same time, and therefore there are no guarantees. And apparently in Critias and in Alcibiades, the other desires which Socrates could never satisfy, they are much stronger, and therefore they run away from him as soon as they had learned what they thought Socrates could teach them, namely, how to be a first-rate debater.

**Student:** To take up Mr. Kaplan's point again, cannot having one's power to speak strengthened, as with those who were around Socrates, also make one more capable to . . . as Alcibiades did, to make one more dangerous?

**LS:** Ya, but what do you do with boxing, to take another example, or wrestling? A boxing or wrestling teacher may be—let us assume he is an honest man, but he cannot vouch for the good behavior of his *student* of boxing or wrestling. The student might use it for armed robbery and other possible things. But similarly, Socrates could not prevent that.

**Student:** But if he gets his student—one sees that sometimes people who are very prone to err. I think even a good boxing teacher would simply have this man out of his care. Sometimes one sees that you get someone who is a little crazy and wants to hurt.

**LS:** We must assume that the case of young Critias and young Alcibiades must have been different; that one could not, just by looking at them, know that they were really no good.

**Student:** . . . .

**LS:** No, no. The *daimonion* precisely, precisely in the Platonic language, the *daimonion*, by being asleep as you say, made clear to Socrates that there was no objection to them. Or if you don't want to use that expression, Socrates did not divine anything terrible when they were very young, when they were with him. And that happened only later.

**Student:** In the case of Alcibiades, it is said that he was a different person when he was with Socrates . . . . He was a very good student until he left Socrates . . . he became a different person than when he was with Socrates . . . .

**LS:** Ya, not only good seeming, he was also sane and sober. But on the other hand, we see from this certain moment on [that] this was for him quite a torture to be self-controlled, and therefore he wished to get away from Socrates. And sooner or later he succeeded, and that gave him much more immediate pleasure than being together with Socrates.

**Student:** You said twice today [that] there are no guarantees. The first time you said it with respect to the marriage counselor; the second time you said it with respect to the question of the parents who teach the values to children and then the children have to go out and apply the values. You say, well, there's not time to do both, teaching values and teaching how to apply them, there is no guarantee there. I wonder, do you see a similarity between the contents of a

marriage counselor who advises two people who come together and a parent who advises . . . a set of values?

**LS:** No, not the same, but the common way here of uncertainty in human, of human *things*. In other words, there is no help against that except, to some extent, *knowledge*, but even knowledge is surely no guarantee of happiness as the word is ordinarily understood. It is not even a guarantee of honest, just behavior.

So I think the time is up now. Now Xenophon pursues this theme of Socrates' responsibility for Critias' and Alcibiades' predicaments, and then he goes and speaks of Critias and Alcibiades separately, and there we will see more clearly in what sense Socrates could have been said to have contributed to Alcibiades' corruption. And then follow some more arguments of the accuser which . . .

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<sup>1</sup> Deleted "it would"

<sup>2</sup> Deleted "it's"

<sup>3</sup> Deleted "and"

<sup>4</sup> Deleted "there is"

<sup>5</sup> Deleted "but"

<sup>6</sup> Deleted "wanted"

<sup>7</sup> Deleted "has"

<sup>8</sup> Deleted "Student: [Inaudible] /LS: Pardon?"

<sup>9</sup> Deleted "whether he"

<sup>10</sup> Deleted "all previously"

<sup>11</sup> Deleted "it is not"

<sup>12</sup> Deleted "this would need"

<sup>13</sup> Deleted "among his"

<sup>14</sup> Deleted "as"

<sup>15</sup> Deleted "he would"

<sup>16</sup> Deleted "Xenophon"

<sup>17</sup> Deleted "will"

<sup>18</sup> Deleted "came in as"

<sup>19</sup> Deleted "Socrates"

<sup>20</sup> Deleted "made"

<sup>21</sup> Deleted "they are"

<sup>22</sup> Deleted "by these"

## Session 9: no date

**Leo Strauss:** <sup>1</sup>We began last time our reading of the *Memorabilia*. Xenophon states first the indictment of Socrates, and the indictment is bipartite, and therefore his refutation is bipartite. [The] first part is the charge that Socrates was impious, and the second part is the charge that he corrupted the young. Now we have read Xenophon's defense of Socrates against the impiety charge, and we have begun to read his refutation of the corruption charge. Is there any point you would like to raise regarding the passages which, the sections we read last time? All right, then we will go on. The corruption charge: Xenophon quotes the points made by the accuser, and the first was Socrates' subversive concerns, Socrates' subversive speeches on the established regime. This fact is not denied by Xenophon. The second charge, which we are discussing now, concerns Critias and Alcibiades. They were companions of Socrates, but Socrates is not responsible for what they did after they left him. While they were with him, they were well-behaved. They sought Socrates because of his mastery in persuasion and in debate, and because he taught the political things and they were politically ambitious men. But they abhorred Socrates' way of life, which is characterized by continence and endurance, and they were the opposite in this respect. So we left off in chapter two, paragraph 19, and I think we begin here.

**Reader:** "But many self-styled lovers of wisdom may reply—" (1.2.19)

**LS:** Ya, in Greek it is "those who claim to philosophize." This is the only discussion—Xenophon's work consists—the only discussion which, is in a sense *philosophic*, because it is directed against people who claim to philosophize. Yes.

**Reader:**

"A just man can never become unjust; a prudent man can never become wanton; in fact no one having learned any kind of knowledge can become ignorant of it. I do not hold with this view. I notice that as those who do not train the body cannot perform the functions proper to the body, so those who do not train the soul cannot perform the functions of the soul: for they cannot do what they ought to do nor avoid what they ought not to do. For this cause fathers try to keep their sons, even if they are prudent lads, out of bad company: for the society of honest men is a training in virtue, but the society of the bad is virtue's undoing. As one of the poets says:

"From the good shalt thou learn good things; but if thou minglest with the bad thou shalt lose even what thou hast of wisdom."

And another says:

"Ah, but a good man is at one time noble, at another base."

My testimony agrees with theirs—" (1.2.19-21)

**LS:** Ya, but in the Greek it comes out more clearly. There are three men who are witnesses here. The first is a poet, Theognis, if I remember well, and then the other, is it Simonides? I do not know.

**Mr. Williamson:** "Author unknown," it says here.

**LS:** Ya, but it looks and sounds like Simonides. And the third is Xenophon himself. Three witnesses. And the main point is here [that] virtue requires learning plus practice. If the practice is not added, virtue does not come about. And that shows of course that virtue is not simply teachable because there is no substitute for one's own practicing.

**Reader:** "My testimony agrees with theirs; for I see that, just as poetry is forgotten unless it is repeated, so instruction, when no longer heeded, fades from the mind. To forget good counsel—" (I.2.21-2)

**LS:** More literally, *didaskaliko in logōi*, the speeches which teach, the teaching speeches, when they are forgotten. And now he goes over immediately, replaces *didaskaliko i logoi* by *nouthetiko in logōi*, by chastising speeches. Yes?

**Reader:** "to forget good counsel is to forget the experiences that prompted the soul to desire prudence: and when those are forgotten, it is not surprising that prudence itself is forgotten. I see also that men who take to drink or get involved in love intrigues lose the power of caring about right conduct and avoiding evil. For many who are careful with their money no sooner fall in love than they begin to waste it: and when they have spent it all, they no longer shrink from making more by methods which they formerly avoided because they thought them disgraceful. How then can it be impossible for one who was prudent to lose his prudence, for one who was capable of just action to become incapable? To me indeed it seems that whatever is honorable, whatever is good in conduct is the result of training, and that this is especially true of prudence. For in the same body along with the soul are planted the pleasures which call to her: "Abandon prudence, and make haste to gratify us and the body." (I.2.22-3)

**LS:** Yes, now what he translates by prudence is in all cases *sohprosyne*, which I would translate in all cases by moderation. This causes some difficulties at some times, but these difficulties would also occur in Greek itself. So they are intended by Xenophon. Very briefly, *sophrosyne*, which I translate as moderation, means in the first place what Aristotle means by it in his analysis in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, and that is self-control regarding the bodily pleasures.<sup>2</sup> But Xenophon's *own* term for that virtue is *enkrateia*, continence. *Sophrosyne* means also (and that is more important) *moderation* in a much broader sense than moderation regarding food and drink and so on, and we must keep this in mind. For instance, here and in other cases which we have seen the opposite to moderation is not incontinence, but something like *hubris* or *mania*, madness. And this is an entirely different and broader context. Now what he says here, in paragraph 21 especially, is this: the desire for moderation stems from certain things which the soul *suffered*. If these sufferings are forgotten, moderation is forgotten. Let me take a very simple example. If someone ate too much and got into troubles, and then decided in the future he will live, eat moderately, that is all very well as long as he *remembers* that. But when he forgets that, when he forgets that *experience* as you would say, then he forgets also the need for moderation and therewith moderation. Is there any other point which you would like to raise here? So the purpose of the context is clear. Xenophon tries to show that it is possible for a man who was good to become bad, and some people say [that] a man who was once good can never become bad, and that he rejects.

**Student:** If one becomes immoderate by forgetting the sufferings that made one take to *sophrosyne*, does that mean [that] to become moderate, you must first have become mad? Have been mad? Have experienced extreme things?

**LS:** Well, as children, to begin with, probably. You have to learn it the hard way, that fire burns or whatever it is. But in some cases, for a good child, a single experience is enough, or perhaps even a single admonishment by the parents, you know, when they have implicit trust [in]<sup>3</sup> the parents, and that is a very good child. Those who are less good try to experiment with forbidden things, but then they are brought back by these bad experiences. And therefore, since this is the case, Critias and Alcibiades could very well have been originally good and become bad afterward. Yes?

**Reader:** “And indeed it was thus with Critias and Alcibiades. So long as they were with Socrates, they found in him an ally who gave them strength to conquer their evil passions. But when they parted from him, Critias fled to Thessaly, and got among men who put lawlessness before justice—” (I.2.24)

**LS:** Literally, “he was together.” That is a term which was used for companions, the people who are together with Socrates. So he was together with these lawless people in Thessaly. In Thessaly.

**Reader:**

“while Alcibiades, on account of his beauty, was hunted by many great ladies, and because of his influence at Athens and among her allies he was spoilt by many powerful men: and as athletes who gain an easy victory in the games are apt to neglect their training, so the honor in which he was held, the cheap triumph he won with the people, led him to neglect himself. Such was their fortune: and when to pride of birth, confidence in wealth, vainglory and much yielding to temptation were added corruption and long separation from Socrates, what wonder if they grew overbearing? For their wrongdoing, then, is Socrates to be called to account by his accuser? And does he deserve no word of praise for having controlled them in the days of their youth, when they would naturally be most reckless and licentious? Other cases, at least, are not so judged. For what teacher of flute, lyre, or anything else, after making his pupils proficient, is held to blame if they leave him for another master, and then turn out incompetent? What father, whose son bears a good character so long as he is with one master, but goes wrong after he has attached himself to another, throws the blame on the earlier teacher? Is it not true that the worse the boy turns out with the second, the higher is his father's praise of the first? Nay, fathers themselves, living with their sons, are not held responsible for their boys' wrongdoing if they are themselves prudent men. This is the test which should have been applied to Socrates too. If there was anything base in his own life, he might fairly have been thought vicious. But, if his own conduct was always prudent, how can he be fairly held to blame for the evil that was not in him?” (I.2.24-8)

**LS:** Yes. But here in the last paragraphs, he states a principle: how one would have to judge fairly in these matters, and if one judges fairly, one will see that Socrates is unfairly accused of responsibility for Critias' and Alcibiades' misconduct. And this will come, will [not] appear in

English in these paragraphs 24 to 26 that Xenophon speaks in the first place, that [he] uses the dual—that is a form [which]<sup>4</sup> doesn't exist in English, which refers to *two* men, not to more than two. And later on he uses singular because he speaks separately about Critias on the one hand, and Alcibiades on the other. So in the main, hitherto Xenophon has treated these two black sheep more or less as if their case were the same. From now on he speaks of the two separately, and first of Critias.

**Reader:** “Nevertheless, although he was himself free from vice, if he saw and approved of base conduct in them, he would be open to censure. Well, when he found that Critias loved Euthydemus and wanted to lead him astray, he tried to restrain him by saying that it was mean and unbecoming in a gentleman to sue like a beggar to the object of his affection, whose good opinion he coveted, stooping to ask a favor that it was wrong to grant. As Critias paid no heed whatever to this protest, Socrates, it is said, exclaimed in the presence of Euthydemus and many others, ‘Critias seems to have the feelings of a pig: he can no more keep away from Euthydemus than pigs can help rubbing themselves against stones.’ Now Critias—” (I.2.29-31)

**LS:** It is not clear whether he said this in the presence of Critias. Ya, let us now—ya. [Laughter]

**Reader:** “Now Critias bore a grudge against Socrates for this; and when he was one of the Thirty and was drafting laws with Charicles, he bore it in mind. He—” (I.2.31)

**LS:** Ya, this “he bore it in mind”—what he translates as bearing in mind, that is the same word which is underlines the title—*apemnēmoneusen*—it means something like bearing grudges or resenting. That is the only time the word occurs in the whole work. Yes.

**Reader:** “He inserted a clause which made it illegal ‘to teach the art of words.’ It was a calculated insult to Socrates, whom he saw no means of attacking, except by imputing to him the practice constantly attributed to philosophers, and so making him unpopular. For I myself never heard Socrates indulge in the practice, nor knew of anyone who professed to have heard him do so.” (I.2.31-2)

**LS:** Ya, Xenophon is here strangely silent as to what was popularly and generally objected to in the philosophers. He doesn't say what it is. There are two obvious possibilities. The first is that the philosophers are impious; and the second, that they make the weaker argument the stronger. It could very well refer to the two things at the same time. <sup>5</sup>So Critias together with Charicles was a legislator, and he wrote down in the laws that one ought not to teach the art of speeches, and this general rebuke against the philosophers was the rationale of that law. But the implication is Socrates did teach the *technē* of speeches. Let us say rhetoric, but perhaps it is not precise enough. So that is in conformity with what we have seen before. Socrates did teach the political things, and this has something to do with the art of speaking altogether. Yes?

**Reader:** “The truth came out. When the Thirty were putting to death many citizens—” (I.2.31-2)

**LS:** The Thirty are the Thirty Tyrants in 403. Ya.



**Reader:** “When the Thirty were putting to death many citizens of the highest respectability and were encouraging many in crime, Socrates had remarked: ‘It seems strange—’” (I.2.32)

**LS:** Perhaps one should translate this word here, *eîpé pou ho Sōkratēs*: “Socrates said somewhere.” That is a locative term, but <sup>6</sup>it does not necessarily have the locative meaning, but you will see later on that in this case it has. Yes. What did Socrates say?

**Reader:** “‘It seems strange enough to me that a herdsman who lets his cattle decrease and go to the bad should not admit that he is a poor cowherd; but stranger still that a statesman when he causes the citizens to decrease and go to the bad, should feel no shame nor think himself a poor statesman.’ This remark was reported to Critias and Charicles, who sent for Socrates, showed him the law and forbade him to hold conversation with the young.” (I.2.32-3)

**LS:** Forbade him to converse with the young. So this is now perhaps a more precise statement about what Socrates did: *conversing* with the young. And the art of speaking is an art of conversing, the dialectical art in the original meaning of the term. Yes, again; the law is repeated again. Yes?

**Reader:**

“May I question you,” asked Socrates, “in case I do not understand any point in your orders?”

“You may,” said they.

“Well now,” said he, “I am ready to obey the laws. But lest I unwittingly transgress through ignorance, I want clear directions from you. Do you think that the art of words from which you bid me abstain is associated with sound or unsound reasoning? For if with sound, then clearly I must abstain from sound reasoning: but if with unsound, clearly I must try to reason soundly.”

“Since you are ignorant, Socrates,” said Charicles in an angry tone, “we put our order into language easier to understand. You may not hold any converse whatever with the young.”

“Well then,” said Socrates, “that there may be no question raised about my obedience, please fix the age limit below which a man is to be accounted young.”

“So long,” replied Charicles, “as he is not permitted to sit in the Council, because as yet he lacks wisdom. You shall not converse with anyone who is under thirty.”

“‘Suppose I want to buy something, am I not even then to ask the price if the seller is under thirty?’

“Oh yes,” answered Charicles, “you may in such cases. But the fact is, Socrates, you are in the habit of asking questions to which you know the answer: and that is what you are not to do.”

“Am I to give no answer, then, if a young man asks me something that I know? — for instance, ‘Where does Charicles live?’ or ‘Where is Critias?’”

“‘Oh yes,’ answered Charicles, “you may, in such cases.”

“But you see, Socrates,” explained Critias, “you will have to avoid your favorite topic, — the cobblers, builders and metal workers; for it is already worn to rags by you in my opinion.”

“Then must I keep off the subjects of which those supply illustrations, Justice, Holiness, and so forth?”

“Indeed yes,” said Charicles, “and cowherds too: else you may find the cattle decrease.”

Thus the truth was out: the remark about the cattle had been repeated to them: and it was this that made them angry with him. (I.2.33-38)

**LS:** Formerly, he translated—Marchant—*apaggelthentos* by “reported,” “it had been reported to them.” So the speech about the cattle, the criticism of Critias’ regime, was not made in the presence of Critias. It was only reported. And there is a slight difference in the conduct of Critias and that of Charicles. Did you notice that? Very slight, but not altogether unimportant. Charicles gets *angry* at Socrates, Critias does not. Now Critias <sup>7</sup>had come from [being] a companion of Socrates, and there is still a slight difference—notice that—in this respect. But the most important point is perhaps this: Socrates did not question the legality of the law promulgated by the Thirty Tyrants. <sup>8</sup>This is the law for the time being. He has to obey it. So Socrates, one cannot compare Socrates here, at least, to Antigone, but rather to Ismene, if one looks for an example in tragedy. Yes. But let us keep this in mind that the legality of the laws laid down by Critias is not questioned. Yes.

**Reader:** “So much, then, for the connection of Critias with Socrates and their relation to each other. I venture to lay it down that learners get nothing from a teacher with whom they are out of sympathy. Now, all the time that Critias and Alcibiades associated with Socrates they were out of sympathy with him, but from the very first their ambition was political advancement. For while they were still with him, they tried to converse, whenever possible, with prominent politicians. Indeed, there is a story told—” (I.2.39-40)

**LS:** Yes, this here refers again to both. And now in the sequel he speaks only of Alcibiades, so there is a history separately, then. Yes?

**Reader:**

Indeed, there is a story told of Alcibiades, that, when he was less than twenty years old, he had a talk about laws with Pericles, his guardian, the first citizen in the State.

“Tell me, Pericles,” he said, “can you teach me what a law is?”

“Certainly,” he replied.

“Then pray teach me. For whenever I hear men praised for keeping the laws, it occurs to me that no one can really deserve that praise who does not know what a law is.”

“Well, Alcibiades, there is no great difficulty about what you desire. You wish to know what a law is. Laws are all the rules approved and enacted by the majority in assembly, whereby they declare what ought and what ought not to be done.”

“Do they suppose it is right to do good or evil?”

“Good, of course, young man, — not evil.”

“But if, as happens under an oligarchy, not the majority, but a minority meet and enact rules of conduct, what are these?”

“Whatsoever the sovereign power in the State, after deliberation, enacts and directs to be done is known as a law.”

“If, then, a despot, being the sovereign power—” (I.2.40-3)

**LS:** A tyrant, one should read.

**Reader:** “If, then, a tyrant, being the sovereign power, enacts what the citizens are to do, are his orders also a law?” “Yes, whatever a tyrant as ruler enacts is also known as a law.” (I.2.43)

**LS:** Strict legal positivism. Whatever the sovereign for the time being declares to, makes the law, that is the law. Yes.

**Reader:**

“But force, the negation of law, what is that, Pericles? Is it not the action of the stronger when he constrains the weaker to do whatever he chooses, not by persuasion, but by force?”

“That is my opinion.”

“Then whatever a tyrant by enactment constrains the citizens to do without persuasion, is the negation of law?”

“I think so: and I withdraw my answer that whatever a tyrant enacts without persuasion is a law.”

“And when the minority passes enactments, not by persuading the majority, but through using its power, are we to call that force or not?”

“Everything, I think, that men constrain others to do ‘without persuasion,’ whether by enactment or not, is not law, but force.”

“It follows then, that whatever the assembled majority, through using its power over the owners of property, enacts without persuasion is not law, but force?”

“Alcibiades,” said Pericles, “at your age, I may tell you, we, too, were very clever at this sort of thing. For the puzzles we thought about and exercised our wits on were just such as you seem to think about now.”

“Ah, Pericles,” said Alcibiades, “if only I had known you intimately when you were at your cleverest in these things!” (I.2.44-46)

**LS:** Now this is Alcibiades’ scene. You see there is a great difference between that and the Critias scene. There is no conflict between Socrates and Alcibiades, and no resentment against Socrates on the part of Alcibiades. This is the first point. The second point, Alcibiades raises the question: What is law? That is a “what is” question, a question which falls within the province of the Socratic questions. But Socrates never raises this question. Also, in Plato there is only one brief dialogue which is devoted to the question “what is law?”—the *Minos*, today generally regarded as spurious, a kind of introduction to the *Laws*. But here, only Alcibiades raises this question, yet at a time when he was still together with Socrates. And it appears that Pericles is unable to answer this question properly because he is completely immersed in politics; and since this is a democracy, he thinks only of democratic laws and does not give a broader definition. There are variety of regimes, not only democracy, but also oligarchy, and therefore you would have to define law so that it fits all regimes. The principle here is that law is never the fundamental thing. The fundamental thing is the regime, the *politeia*, because the *politeia* is the origin of the laws and establishes the laws according to its understanding. Is this distinction clear, between . . . the word *politeia* which I use is ordinarily translated by constitution, and the constitution as we use the word is of course a law, the fundamental law. But *politeia* is distinguished from law, fundamental or not fundamental. It is the actual or factual distribution of

power in a society. And <sup>9</sup>there are various ways in which it may be located, and therefore there is a variety of regimes. But the point which Socrates makes here is this difference between good and bad regimes: that in bad regimes, the ruling power that may very well be the majority, lays down the law without due consideration for the minority. That applies with the proper modification to all regimes. Every regime may be tyrannical, may lay down laws of the goodness of which the ruled are not convinced. That is a tall order. I mean, one can say perhaps that they should be convinced of the goodness to obey the law even if they do not like the law, but [that] they should be convinced of the goodness of the law, that is something different, is it not? And the question is whether this is not, what Socrates says here, does not demand too much.

**Student:** You mean, what Alcibiades —

**LS:** Alcibiades, yes. I'm sorry.

**Student:** Isn't it in a way, in a way, isn't maybe the fundamental opposition between persuasion and violence or compulsion a kind of over-simplification that points to *the* problem of the law, namely, that it has to do both.

**LS:** Yes, at this—

**Student:** To make that a simple opposition in that way —

**LS:** Ya, but one could say perhaps that the coercion exercised by the law may only refer to criminals and not to a large body of people. But surely, without coercion a law would not be effective. <sup>10</sup>I don't think that this is meant here. The indication, a democracy may be as tyrannical as a tyrant, as an evil tyrant. Persuasion is decisive, and Socrates is a master of persuasion. Therefore, Socrates would be the best support for any regime which would like to rule, is willing to rule, by persuasion rather than by force. And this would also explain why such people like Critias and Alcibiades have a special interest in Socrates and why they are attracted by him. So this difference between Critias and Alcibiades is I think of some importance, because Alcibiades was surely connected with Socrates, a very ambiguous figure, but an outstanding man. And I think from the Platonic dialogues one also gets this impression, that Alcibiades is a different man than Critias, belongs to a different league than Critias. And also I think from Thucydides, though Thucydides does not speak about Critias. And in Thucydides, there are three outstanding Athenians, they are Themistocles, Pericles, and Alcibiades. And Pericles is a *normal* man; and Themistocles and Alcibiades are marginal, they both end as traitors to Athens. A symbolic figure. So let us finish this section.

**Reader:** “So soon, then, as they presumed themselves to be the superiors of the politicians, they no longer came near Socrates. For apart from their general want of sympathy with him, they resented being cross-examined about their errors when they came. Politics had brought them to Socrates, and for politics they left him. But Criton was a true associate of Socrates, as were Chaerophon, Chaerecrates, Hermogenes, Simmias, Cebes, Phaedondas, and others who consorted with him not that they might shine in the courts or the assembly, but that they might become gentlemen, and be able to do their duty by house and household, and relatives and

friends, and city and citizens. Of these not one, in his youth or old age, did evil or incurred censure.” (I.2.47-48)

**LS:** So these are the true associates of Socrates. These are of course not all, but seven examples. These are unpolitical men. The term which he uses here is that they did not wish to become orators, either political or forensic orators, but they wished to become gentlemen and to use nobly the household, the servants, the relatives, their friends, the city, and the citizens. So not “doing their duty,” I believe he said, they *use* them. They do not go into politics. These are the true associates of Socrates. And now of course the great question arises: Well, how then is Socrates a teacher of politics, and yet his true associates are unpolitical men? The simplest formulation of the question: What precisely did Socrates *teach*? And this is of course discussed in this context, because the corruption of the young means the *teaching* of the young. What did Socrates teach? Now before we go onto the next point, let us make a pause and see whether there is <sup>11</sup>any point you would like to bring up.

**Student:** Could you explain the part in here where Socrates asks Critias if <sup>12</sup>he’s to restrain from speaking in words, he says. Is it sound or unsound reasoning that I am expected to refrain from? Because if it is sound reason, then I can understand that very well, but if it is unsound reason, then it would seem that one would strive to make that unsound reason sound, and that argument doesn’t seem to make much sense. I wonder if there’s any terms that could be put in so that it would come through more clearly?

**LS:** Well, Socrates wants to point out the lack of clarity in that law. I mean, they forbid to teach the art of speeches. What does it mean? Do they wish people to speak badly, irrationally? Then of course if they want to achieve that, then the best thing to do is to forbid the art of speeches, the teaching of the art of speeches.

**Student:** If you accept the first part of it, that he says well, if it is sound speeches that you are asking me to refrain from, then I can understand it very well. And I think someone could criticize at that point and say, well if you can understand refraining from sound speeches, what possible motivation could you have for wanting to make unsound speeches sound?

**LS:** Ya, you must not forget the situation. These were the *rulers*, and they were rather sanguinary rulers, and there Socrates had to speak with a certain amount of restraint. When you look again at the beginning, in paragraph 33, Socrates asked them whether it is permitted to inquire if he did not understand something, <sup>13</sup>of the forbidden things. Is it permitted to inquire? This form of introducing a question occurs only here. Socrates’ ordinary form to introduce a question is: Tell me, just tell me. But in this way he cannot talk to Critias and Charicles in this position, and I think what he means to make clear by this argument is: You apparently want to have people who *speak* and *think* irrationally, because that would be the result of your prohibition against teaching the art of speeches. And he tries to intimate this to Critias, probably he didn’t have any chance to make clear anything to Charicles. So now this was . . . .

**Student:** I am struck by this statement you made that Socrates never raises the question of “what is law?” You mean in Xenophon?

**LS:** Ya. In that. And also in—well, in Plato, to some extent he does it in the *Laws*, but I could easily reply, honestly reply, that this is the Athenian Stranger and not Socrates. But where else does he raise the question: What is law? In the *Minos*, and I believe the *Minos* is genuine but it is a very strange dialogue. None of the great dialogues, the famous dialogues, none of these deals with the question of “what is law? I am not speaking only of the *Republic*, *Symposium*, *Phaedo*, and *Phaedrus*, but I think also of such works as *Laches* and *Charmides*. So where is the question “what is law?” in these? This question goes very deep because it leads necessarily beyond the established order, not only beyond the established regime, because you see then the established regime is one among many and therefore the question of<sup>14</sup>—by this very fact you question, to begin with, the “quote absoluteness unquote” of the established regime. You may finally find out that the established regime is the best, but you have to go through a process of reasoning in which this adhesion is suspended.

**Student:** Though since raising the question of what is the best polity is, isn’t that—why does that seem, I mean, since if it is the case that laws are always relative to polities, raising the question of the best polity would then by implication raise the same question.

**LS:** Yes! Then one would have to look at the dialogue in which the question of the best regime is raised and you know that the context is to answer the question of “what is justice?”, and one is confronted with a denial of the goodness of justice and therefore one has to go very deep and beyond all accepted views. But this is done in a private circle, in the house of Cephalus, and there is another question connected with “what is *nomos*?”, and that is, *ti esti theos*: “what is a god?”, which is also never raised. The closest approximation to that is the *Symposium*, where the question is raised, “is *eros* a god?” and therewith by implication, but not more. And *nomos*, while it is true that *nomos* on reflection proves to be secondary to the regime, in another sense *nomos* is more, is primary. The simple fact that there are in all languages (I mean also in all ancient languages) terms for *law*, and not in all languages terms for *politeia* shows [this]. Everywhere you find law, ordinarily in monarchic contexts. But therefore, since there is only one kind of regime, the question of the regime does not arise, you know, so the law and then of course also the gods of the city, whose worship is demanded by the laws, they are primary in the horizon of the citizen. The question of the regimes comes up in a stage of a greater reflection on the basis of traveling. You know Odysseus, who had seen many cities; he saw that there are many regimes and of course also a great variety of laws. But the primary thing, I believe, is [that] law is a more primary phenomenon.

**Student:** I wonder if somehow, well, if somehow the connection of—I mean, if there’s a connection of *nomos* with . . . whether that sort of doesn’t, doesn’t, and I want to tie this up to the notion of the regime, that there seems to be another notion of law. Or rather, when one thinks of the law of a particular polity, that always points you, if you start to reflect on it, to the fundamental—well, to the polity or to what Aristotle would call the order of distributive justice, which is really presupposed by any, by any particular set of laws.

**LS:** Not quite, because distributive justice is disregarded by the wrong kinds of regimes.

**Student:** Well, but I thought that even if it’s not a just distribution, *some* principle of distribution has to be adhered to by any regime.

**LS:** Ya, but it may be a perverted one, namely, that those who are acceptable to the regime are rewarded for that, and those unacceptable are dis-rewarded.

**Student:** But there's some principle of order, some principle of—

**LS:** Ya. Yes, in the very crude sense that even a gang of robbers must have some justice, otherwise they would not be able to survive as a gang, but this will be a very minimal, a bare minimum.

**Student:** Well, all then I have to say is that this is also in a sense a kind of law. So it's a distribution, I mean, the Greek term brings that out, *dianomē*.

**LS:** Yes, but if that means the distribution of things to persons, and this is done not necessarily on the basis of laws but this is done by the people on the spot, and they may follow some crude rules of thumb which cannot properly be called laws.

**Student:** Yeah, but, don't—what I really wanted to get at was that, don't people tend to think that the principle of distribution that pertains in a society, ordinary people tend to think that this is something that stems from the divine because they don't reflect on the extent to which, or—well, if they reflect upon the extent to which it depends on human action, they think of that human action as partially motivated or as coming under the control of the divine.

**LS:** Ya, but I believe that in these Geek reflections on the relation of law and regime, divine law is disregarded, as some form of divine laws will be in every regime in olden times. Therefore this is irrelevant for establishing the *difference* between the various regimes.

**Student:** Yeah, but I thought that it also seemed to be a rule that every ancient, or almost every ancient legislator, followed that the distribution that his laws were meant to bring about was one that he attributed to advice from the divinity.

**LS:** Not necessarily. There was, I mean, there could after all be—

**Student:** Well, the greatest legislators—

**LS:** deliberation among the members of the community, who say [that] if someone is particularly brave in battle, or . . . that what should be done? Should he be given a whole sheep or whatever it may be? It is not necessary that any consideration of divine law should enter.

**Student:** Well, I'm thinking of things like what Machiavelli says about the relation of Romulus and Remus to Numa, and that, I mean, in order to get the laws accepted, and the sort of thing Aristotle says, of course, too: that in order to get the laws accepted, since they do go against the grain, one has to invoke a more than human authority.

**LS:** But that somehow transcends completely the horizon of the citizen in which these questions arise first, then you speak of the founder—

**Student:** Yeah—

**LS:** prior to the existence even of the city, and of the law of the regime and of laws, these questions arise. But on the other hand, you see in Plato's *Republic*, the regulations regarding the divine things come up after the whole order has been established, the end of Book 4, I think, you know, as a kind of *seal* on the whole establishment and not as a foundation. And still less in the *Republic*, in Aristotle it's the same. This question regarding the founder <sup>15</sup>or the legislator in the sense in which Rousseau means it, that belongs to a different order of the argument.

**Student:** Yeah, well, that is what I, that is what I was talking about. But I—it just seems to me that there is a certain sense, at least when one looks at Greek texts, that this is in a sense also a law, that fundamental order established by the founder.

**LS:** Ya, but what I would say, in this sense that is not simply law, that is law in a qualified sense. Law is some order, *taxis*, this, but not every *taxis* is a *nomos*, is a law. Is there any other point you would like to raise in connection to this? Then we will . . . oh—

**Student:** You said earlier that you commented on the passage where—

[change of tape]

—Xenophon seems to imply that Socrates would be the best man to found a regime because he would be able to do it by persuasion rather than violence. But here, but then later on when you were commenting on the passage that describes what was bad about Critias and Alcibiades, that they came to Socrates only because of their interest in politics, it seems that even if Socrates is the best man to found a regime he's not going to be willing to found that regime. And so that the criticism that Xenophon raised against Critias and Alcibiades doesn't seem to be altogether fair because Socrates himself would not be willing to found that regime, or is not sufficiently ambitious, politically, to engage in . . .

**LS:** I did not quite understand you, which has I believe only acoustic reasons—

**Student:** Excuse me?

**LS:** Only reasons of acoustics, I did not understand you. But are you speaking of a certain difficulty in Socrates, that on the one hand, he is teaching the political things, and on the other his true associates seem to be unpolitical men. Is this what you mean?

**Student:** Yes, except that I didn't wish here to repeat the point that you had made, but as to why it is the case that Socrates is unambitious. Xenophon should, when he is criticizing Alcibiades and Critias, level against them charges, he seems to make it a vice that they are interested in politics.



**LS:** Yes, that is true, but we do not yet have the whole evidence together. But let us read only one passage now, which is very pertinent. Book 1, chapter six, paragraph 15. Chapter six, paragraph 15.

**Reader:** On yet another occasion Antiphon asked him: “How can you suppose that you make politicians of others, when you yourself avoid politics even if you understand them?” “How now, Antiphon?” he retorted, “should I play a more important part in politics by engaging in them alone or by taking pains to turn out as many competent politicians as possible?” (I.6.15)

**LS:** So there is this you have also to consider. So the question from this point of view would be this: <sup>16</sup>so there was nothing wrong in Socrates’ companions going into politics, but there was something wrong with Critias and Alcibiades, because they were so much corrupted, either by the people in Thessaly or by the many beautiful and splendid women and so on in the case of Alcibiades. That’s the question. And there is one man of whose connection with Socrates Xenophon says nothing, but of whose connection we know through other traditions, and that was Theramenes. Theramenes. He played a considerable role in Athenian politics and became a victim of the Thirty, of the Thirty Tyrants, and he was called something like “the trimmer.” When there was a democracy, he was leaning over to oligarchy, and when there was an oligarchy he was leaning over to democracy. So that <sup>17</sup>the principle can be understood: real moderation. And there is another man whom Socrates encourages to go into politics, this is too long now to read, that is Book 3, chapter seven, where Socrates encourages Charmides to go into politics, and Charmides is one of the Thirty Tyrants, and that is of course awkward, because this turned out very badly. But at that time when Socrates encouraged him, he seems to be very promising, and he was very shy, and <sup>18</sup>from shyness he did not wish to go into politics. And Socrates showed him how unreasonable that shyness is in his case, and so he was responsible. But this Xenophon does not discuss here in the second chapter, and you can say a good enough reason is that <sup>19</sup>this point was not made by the accuser. He spoke only of Critias and not of Charmides. So that is a complex phenomenon, Socrates and the politicians. He surely had some influence on leading political men in Athens, but that was not altogether a success, and perhaps it *could* not have been altogether a success. Perhaps the only example occurring in Xenophon of a successful Socratic in politics is Xenophon himself, when he was in Asia Minor and became practically the leader of this Greek army and saved it by bringing it back to the coast. Here we see a Socratic in the action of ruling, a successful action.

**Student:** But isn’t it true also though that in the *Anabasis*, Xenophon tries to found a city, besides just ruling the men who were under his command and he doesn’t succeed—

**LS:** Could you?

**Mr. Williamson:** [sitting closer to the microphone] Isn’t it true also in the *Anabasis* that Xenophon attempts to found a city that doesn’t succeed?

**LS:** Yes, but on the other hand, the soldiers, that is true—but you see he is not a tyrant, he doesn’t wish, try to force his soldiers to found a city there. But on the other hand, the soldiers wanted to have him—to a certain point they wanted to have him as *the* ruler, the monarch, monarchic ruler of the whole army, and he declined that. Now perhaps there is—politics *is* a very

complicated business, and I think that even the daily newspapers would suffice to convince us of that, and therefore if one wants to have elegant solutions, clean solutions, one must look elsewhere. And that is of some importance both ways, both regarding one's reasonable expectations from politics *and* also to direct one to some other things outside of politics which may satisfy one's desire for elegant and clean solutions, as I call it. So shall we go on?

**Reader:** “‘But,’ said his accuser, ‘Socrates taught sons to treat their fathers with contempt: he persuaded them that he made his companions wiser than their fathers: he said that the law allowed a son to put his father in prison if he convinced a jury that he was insane; and this was a proof that it was lawful for the wiser to keep the more ignorant in jail.’ In reality Socrates held that, if you clap fetters on a man for his ignorance, you deserve to be kept in jail yourself by those whose knowledge is greater than your own: and such reasoning led him frequently to consider the difference between Madness and Ignorance. That madmen should be kept in prison was expedient, he thought, both for themselves and for their friends: but those who are ignorant of what they ought to know deserve to learn from those who know it.” (I.2.49-51).

**LS:** Ya, this raises of course the question of what will happen if the ignorant refuse to learn. Is this not a kind of madness? But the most important point here is that what the accuser said amounts to this: that Socrates subverted paternal authority, and Xenophon does not deny this. He did that, and that is a very grave thing. We are so much accustomed—not only in our age now, where we have this famous rebellion of the young generation, but for many generations—are so much accustomed to this questioning of paternal authority that we do not understand the *bearing* of such an action in former times. This will become even clearer from what follows.

**Reader:**

“‘But,” said his accuser, “Socrates caused his companions to dishonour not only their fathers, but their other relations as well, by saying that invalids and litigants get benefit not by their relations, not from their relations, but from their doctor or their counsel. Of friends too he said that their goodwill was worthless, unless they could combine with it some power to help one: only those deserved honour who knew what was the right thing to do, and could explain it. Thus by leading the young to think that he excelled in wisdom and in ability to make others wise, he had such an effect on his companions that no one counted for anything in their estimation in comparison with him. Now I know that he did use this language about fathers, relations and friends. And, what is more, he would say that no—” (I.2.51-53).

**LS:** Wait here. So again, Xenophon *admits* that the charge, which includes that Socrates persuaded his companions that he was most wise and most able to make his companions wise, that this charge was justified. That's important. And this, it is clearer here than in the case of the father, but he speaks still of the father; he speaks of all relatives here. Aristotle says in his *Politics* somewhere, we seek, all men seek, not the *patrion*, not the paternal, the ancestral, but the good. That is, in a nutshell, the formula of what I said is here. Tradition as tradition is not authoritative but needs justification because what we seek primarily is not such tradition, it's the good.

**Reader:** “Now I know that he did use this language about fathers, relations and friends. And, what is more, he would say that so soon as the soul, the only seat of intelligence, is gone out of a man, even though he be our nearest and dearest, we carry out his body and hide it in the tomb. Moreover, a man's dearest friend is himself: yet, even in his lifetime he removes or lets another remove from his body whatever is useless and unprofitable. He removes his own nails, hair, corns: he lets the surgeon cut and cauterize him, and, aches and pains notwithstanding, feels bound to thank and fee him for it. He spits out the saliva from his mouth as far away as he can, because to retain it doesn't help him, but harms him rather. Now in saying all this, he was not giving a lesson on ‘the duty of burying one's father alive, or making mincemeat of one's body’: he meant to show that unreason is unworth, and was urging the necessity of cultivating sound sense and usefulness, in order that he who would fain be valued by father or by brother or by anyone else may not rely on the bond of familiarity and neglect him, but may try to be useful to all those by whom he would be valued.” (I.2.53-55)

**LS:** Yes, this is the key point. Only being helpful, only being *able* to be helpful, causes genuine respect, and therefore if you want to be respected, you must try to be helpful. Not kinship, nor affection, but helpfulness, this is the third point or the fourth point raised by the accuser. But you see there is a kind of cohesion between the various points made by the accuser: so the questioning of the established regime, and Critias and Alcibiades, <sup>20</sup>that culminates in the question, “what is law?”, because the affair with Critias includes Socrates’ submission to the laws of the Thirty Tyrants. And then the question, it’s the question of paternal authority. Yes.

**Reader:**

“Again, his accuser alleged that he selected from the most famous poets the most immortal, the most immortal, I’m sorry, the most immoral passages, and used them as evidence in teaching his companions to be tyrants and malefactors: for example, Hesiod's line:

“‘No work is a disgrace, but idleness is a disgrace.’”<sup>i</sup>

He was charged with explaining this line as an injunction to refrain from no work, dishonest or disgraceful, but to do anything for gain.

Now, though Socrates would fully agree that it is a benefit and a blessing to a man to be a worker, and a disadvantage and an evil to be an idler — that work, in fact, is a blessing, idleness an evil — ‘working,’ ‘being a worker,’ meant to him doing good work; but gambling and any occupation that is immoral and leads to loss he called idling. When thus interpreted there is nothing amiss with the line:

‘No work is a disgrace, but idleness is a disgrace.’” (I.2.56-57)

**LS:** Now this is—of course, one would have to rewrite the translation rather completely. The accuser had said that Socrates said people should not abstain from any unjust or base work, but do all the things for the sake of gain. And now, when he gives Socrates’ view, there is complete silence about injustice and baseness or their opposites, justice and nobility, but only of the good and bad, which do not necessarily have this moral meaning. This is a part of the whole story, <sup>21</sup>the questioning of the noble, the understanding of the end of man in terms of the good as the useful. In Plato’s *Republic*, when they discuss the marriage regulations—Socrates says, as you

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<sup>i</sup> Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 309.

know, it is an extreme break with all custom—Socrates says the useful marriages, meaning useful for the procreation of the best offspring, they shall be regarded as the holy ones. One can say it is a reduction of the holy to the useful, [and] here, a reduction of the noble to the useful. Yes?

**Reader:**

“Again, his accuser said that he often quoted the passage from Homer, showing how Odysseus:

“‘Whenever he found one that was a captain and a man of mark, stood by his side, and restrained him with gentle words: ‘Good sir, it is not seemly to affright thee like a coward, but do thou sit thyself and make all thy folk sit down...’ But whatever man of the people he saw and found him shouting, him he drove with his sceptre and chid him with loud words: ‘Good sir, sit still and hearken to the words of others that are thy betters: but thou art no warrior and a workling, a weakling, never reckoned whether in battle or in council.’”<sup>ii</sup>

This passage, it was said, he explained to mean that the poet approved of chastising common and poor folk. But Socrates never said that: indeed, on that view he would have thought himself worthy of chastisement. For what he did say—but what he did say was that those who render no service either by word or deed, who cannot help army or city or the people itself in time of need, ought to be stopped, even if they have riches in abundance, above all if they are insolent as well as inefficient. But Socrates—” (I.2.58-59)

**LS:** Let us stop here for one moment. So here this is his Homer quotation from the First Book of the *Iliad*, where it is described how Odysseus talked differently to the kings and men of mark on the one hand, and the common people on the other. And Socrates is said to have quoted these verses frequently. But Xenophon does not explain *why* Socrates liked to quote these verses. Xenophon will answer that somewhere, in a rather unexpected place, but he does not deny that these were favorite verses for Socrates. And what he tries to show is that Socrates of course was not an enemy of the common people, for the very simple reason which he mentions, that Socrates himself belonged to the common people. But he must have meant something by it, and that is not yet made clear. Perhaps one can generalize this and say—I mean, generalize what Odysseus says—there are roughly two kinds of men, and to these two kinds of men one must talk differently. Perhaps this was the reason why Socrates liked to quote these verses. So then *demos* does not mean here *demos* in the ordinary political sense, meaning those people who have to earn a living, but it means <sup>22</sup>here, so to speak, the intellectual *demos*, the people who are intellectually the inferiors of the kings and men of mark.

**Reader:** “But Socrates, at least, was just the opposite of all that: he showed himself to be one of the people and a friend of mankind. For although he had many eager disciples among citizens and strangers, yet he never exacted a fee for his society from any one of them, but of his abundance he gave without stint to all. Some indeed, after getting from him a few trifles for nothing, became vendors of them at a great price to others, and showed none of his sympathy with the people, refusing to talk with those who had no money to give him. But Socrates did far

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<sup>ii</sup> *Iliad*, trans. A. Lang, W. Leaf, and E. Myers (NY: Macmillan, 1893), II.188.

more to win respect for the State in the world at large than Lichas, whose services to Sparta have made his name immortal. For Lichas used to entertain the strangers staying at Sparta during the Feast of the Dancing Boys; but Socrates spent his life in lavishing his gifts and rendering the greatest services to all who cared to receive them. For he always made his associates better men before he parted with them.

Such was the character—” (I.2.60-61)

**LS:** Yes, so this is the answer to this last charge, the last quoted charge of the accuser; and now there comes a peroration.

**Reader:** “Such was the character of Socrates. To me he seemed to deserve honor rather than death at the hands of the State. And a consideration of his case in its legal aspect will confirm my opinion. Under the laws, death is the penalty inflicted on persons proved to be thieves, highwaymen, cutpurses, kidnappers, robbers of temples; and from such criminals no man was so widely separated as he.” (I.2.62)

**LS:** Ya. Well, no one accused Socrates of being a cutpurse or something of this kind. <sup>23</sup>It’s here [that] he says: If we consider the Socrates according to the laws, ya, but <sup>24</sup>did the accusation not consider Socrates according to the laws? Let us read on.

**Reader:** “Moreover, to the State he was never the cause of disaster in war, or strife or treason or any other evil, any evil whatever.” (I.2.63)

**LS:** Is treason not a capital crime according to the law? There is something strange here. Of course impiety would be a crime according to the then prevailing notions. Here Xenophon seems to make a distinction between what the law *should* forbid and should deal with in the first place, and what the law deals with only in the secondary sense. Of course, no community is possible without the prohibition against treason, but the primary sphere of the laws as described here would be ordinary crimes of citizen against citizen, and not against the city, let alone against the gods. Yes, so Socrates was not responsible for a lost war, nor for a rising of treason, nor for any other evil that hurts the city. Yes?

**Reader:** “Again, in private life no man by him was ever deprived of good or involved in ill. None of these crimes was ever so much as imputed to him.” (I.2.63)

**LS:** I think crimes is [the] wrong translation. I would think [that], as this does not refer to crime, this refers to a non-criminal helping or harm, non-criminal harming only. Because he had spoken before of criminal—to do something bad to a man, that is not necessarily a crime. It may be *bad*, but it is not necessarily a crime.

**Reader:** “How then could he be guilty of the charges? For so far was he from ‘rejecting the gods,’ as charged in the indictment, that no man was more conspicuous for his devotion to the service of the gods: so far from ‘corrupting the youth,’ as his accuser actually charged against him, that if any among his companions had evil desires, he openly tried to reform them and

exhorted them to desire the fairest and noblest virtue, by which men prosper in public life and in their homes. By this conduct did he not deserve high honor from the State?" (I.2.64)

**LS:** Now the last word is "the city," the last word of this part. So this is Socrates and the city, and the answer given is Socrates would have deserved honor rather than capital punishment. The final thesis reminds us of Plato's *Apology of Socrates*, where Socrates is asked to propose a proper retribution to him, and he says the Prytaneum, that he should be seated and fed in the Prytaneum, and something like this is implied here. There are some other—here there is one little point, he says, the most noble and grandest virtue by which men <sup>25</sup>inhabit cities and at home. The first, [as] if they were not at home here; but [there is no] accusative here, the *oikous* or something. Then one could say, by which they administer their homes, or manage well cities and households. But by this change in expression this is excluded. The meaning of inhabit must be assumed. So this is the end of the refutation of the charge, and now a new part of the work begins, and, in fact, the whole rest of the book is one part distinguished from the first part. Let us only read the very beginning of chapter three.

**Reader:** "In order to support my opinion that he benefited his companions, alike by actions that revealed his own character and by his conversation, I will set down what I recollect of these." (I.3.1)

**LS:** Yes, so he will now describe how Socrates benefited his companions. And that is the theme of the rest of the book: not so much the city, but the companions. And we must see what this means and <sup>26</sup>what we can learn from this about Socrates and about the good life. Now is there any point you would like to raise?

**Student:** . . . .

**LS:** Ya, but this would seem, that is a new consideration, that is a new consideration, that implies that the previous consideration, regarding Socrates' piety or impiety, and so regarding corruption or corrupting or non-corrupting the young, has nothing to do with the laws, that would mean they are not crimes. And this would be, is a strange proposal, ya? Because if they were not, Xenophon had not denied this before. They're taken for granted that these are crimes, according to the laws, but Socrates was not guilty of them. But here he implies that they are not crimes. The least one could say is that this remark is a further inducement to give thought to the question, "what precisely is law?" Perhaps this would answer the question why impiety and corrupting the young could not, well, be legal crimes. I do not know. But that thought is very obvious to us today, is it not? I think there is now no provision in the penal code in the state of Maryland that corruption of the young is forbidden with such and such a penalty, or impiety too. <sup>27</sup>But this question, the question "what is law?"—which we have seen here only discussed by Pericles and Alcibiades, or rather by Alcibiades and Pericles—needs a further and more comprehensive discussion. This may be some additional contribution to the discussion.

**Student:** What do you think of the dramatic presentation of the Alcibiades-Pericles . . . .

**LS:** Dramatic?

**Student:** Yeah.

**LS:** You mean the conversation?

**Student:** Yes, yes, the conversation was presented—

**LS:** To some extent it is also [with]<sup>28</sup> Critias, is this not also a conversation?

**Student:** Yes.

**LS:** Hitherto we have not yet had a Socratic conversation in which Socrates is the leader, ya? And because when he's talking to Critias, Socrates is at the receiving end entirely.

**Student:** But, I mean, it seems that it's a rather—I mean, even though it's not the only one, it's a dramatic way to present what the effect of Socratic teaching is.

**LS:** Sure. Ya, but what Xenophon explicitly tries to show by this story is how eager the very young Alcibiades was to talk with leading political men, ya? And not what you, I think rightly, infer from it. That is what he says. Even while they were with Socrates, they already were eager to have such conversations, and he gives this example.

**Student:** Yeah, the funny thing is that this, he, he doesn't, he doesn't ingratiate himself with Pericles . . . .

**LS:** Ya, they were very close relatives, and Pericles was his guardian. No, and Alcibiades regarded himself as—even so very young, not yet twenty—regarded himself as superior to that very distinguished citizen. But this happens at all times, that young people think they are cleverer. So—

[end of tape]

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<sup>1</sup> Deleted: "LS: Is this your time too, 4:27? Mr. Williamson: I have a bit later, I think. LS: Oh perfect, we begin."

<sup>2</sup> Deleted "but then it means"

<sup>3</sup> Deleted "of"

<sup>4</sup> Deleted "that"

<sup>5</sup> Deleted "and here it is"

<sup>6</sup> Deleted "it has also"

<sup>7</sup> Deleted "was"

<sup>8</sup> Deleted "they have"

<sup>9</sup> Deleted "this may be"

<sup>10</sup> Deleted "That"

<sup>11</sup> Deleted "anything you would like"

<sup>12</sup> Deleted "it's"

<sup>13</sup> Deleted "which"

<sup>14</sup> Deleted "you, you"

<sup>15</sup> Deleted "and"

<sup>16</sup> Deleted "what about"

<sup>17</sup> Deleted "this is, you know, that is"

<sup>18</sup> Deleted "he didn't wish to"

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- <sup>19</sup> Deleted “this was not”  
<sup>20</sup> Deleted “that has to do with”  
<sup>21</sup> Deleted “what they”  
<sup>22</sup> Deleted “has here a meaning”  
<sup>23</sup> Deleted “this is”  
<sup>24</sup> Deleted “did we not”  
<sup>25</sup> Deleted “inhabit or dwell”  
<sup>26</sup> Deleted “how”  
<sup>27</sup> Deleted “and”  
<sup>28</sup> Deleted “the”



## Session 10: no date

**Leo Strauss:** <sup>1</sup>Well, let us begin. So last time we were at this <sup>2</sup>chapter on the divine, or on the *daimonion*.<sup>i</sup> We came across a difficulty: a passage regarding hearing, which is, it seems, wholly unintelligible. This difficulty had not yet occurred before—or rather, as I should say, I, <sup>3</sup>who had read this book quite a few times, had never observed this difficulty before. And I suppose there are other passages which contain difficulties, and which escape me now. Now <sup>4</sup>a general reflection may be here in order: Is it not *always* then that <sup>5</sup>one observes something one has not observed before, are not all worthwhile books, as people say, *inexhaustible*? For practical purposes, as far as I'm concerned, I would say, and people like me, I would say, *yes*. But are they simply in themselves inexhaustible? Must not the considerations act, in an individual, in principle, to exhaust such books? There are of course cases which are themselves uninteresting, in which an author refers to a human being or to an event of which we know nothing, and therefore unless there is some happy discovery, lucky discovery, they will always remain unintelligible. But that is not of course inexhaustible.

Let me discuss one example, which has something to do with Xenophon. In his great history, he mentions a writer who has described the march upward of Cyrus, the younger Cyrus, and the march downward of the Greeks, i.e., who has done what Xenophon did in his *Anabasis*. But he calls here that man Themistogenes of Syracuse. <sup>6</sup>Did such a man exist and write that book, or is this merely a fiction for whatever reason he might have made such a fiction? Now, this is impossible. Nothing whatever is known about Themistogenes of Syracuse and therefore we cannot decide this question, which is of some importance: Did Xenophon indulge in such jokes, that he replaced his name by the name of a non-existent, wholly fictitious human being? Now in the same context, he speaks in the *Hellenika*, in the Greek history, he speaks of the Spartan admiral Pythagoras, and you will—pardon me, in the *Anabasis*, he speaks of a Spartan admiral Pythagoras. In the Greek History, where Xenophon is never mentioned, that admiral is called Samios, which can, may mean the man from Samos, and Pythagoras was from Samos. So I repeat: in the Greek History, Xenophon is never mentioned and Pythagoras is never mentioned. He avoids the name Xenophon in the same book in which he avoids the name Pythagoras. This could mean an allusion to the connection between Xenophon or what Xenophon stood for and Pythagoras. And Pythagoras does not necessarily mean this individual Pythagoras but, say, the philosopher—

[break in tape]

—the passage. And so we must we reconsider the passage, understanding of which we faced last time. And for this reason, we have also to reconsider the context. Now I will remind you of that context. In chapter three and four of the First Book and beyond, Xenophon continues the themes piety and continence, in that order, which means he still follows the plan of the indictment. He repeats these themes, which means there are differences between the former treatment and the later treatment, between the first and the second statement. Now, as regards piety as treated in

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<sup>i</sup> This apparently refers to a portion of the previous session that was not recorded.

chapter three, Xenophon mentions here the Oracle of Delphi, Pythia; he mentions Socrates' view on prayer, but he is silent on the *daimonion*. So there are some, at least, and one has to take these things into account. Now when he comes to speak of continence in the same chapter, the subject in the third chapter is continence in the strict or narrow sense, in which he does not even include endurance, which is frequently regarded as a part of continence. In the first statement, which occurred in chapter two, the subject continence was discussed as a reply to the corruption charge, and it was shown Socrates could not have corrupted the young because he was so continent, and therefore the discussion of continence was linked up with a discussion of whether and in what sense Socrates was a *teacher*. Nothing of this kind in chapter three. The only *new* subject in chapter three is Socrates' conduct and his view about the right conduct at dinner parties. Otherwise, the second [discussion] is much poorer. But, and this is of importance, here we find a conversation, a Socratic conversation, on continence, the interlocutor being Xenophon; and that is the only conversation between Socrates and Xenophon that occurs in Xenophon's Socratic writings. We have seen that <sup>7</sup>Socrates was very indignant about Critobulus, who was the occasion for the conversation, having kissed a handsome boy. And he was also very indignant about Xenophon, and Xenophon is treated worse by Socrates than anyone else. Socrates calls him "you wretch" and "you fool." He does to Xenophon what the Aristophanean Socrates does to Strepsiades. After the conclusion of this conversation, of the report of this conversation, Xenophon mentions a joke of Socrates which has no direct relation with the conversation, but from which we learn at least that from time to time Socrates joked; and whether this can be used retroactively for the understanding of the conversation with Xenophon, that everyone must decide for himself.

Now we come to chapter four, where we encounter the difficulty. Here a new round begins: again, piety, and in chapter five, as we will see, again continence. Here we find a conversation with a companion who spent his whole day with Socrates, and yet was flagrantly and shockingly impious. And yet here, where there was much more reason for being indignant [than]<sup>8</sup> the case of Xenophon and Critobulus, Socrates is not indignant. Socrates was present at this conversation on piety. The interlocutor was Aristodemus, best known from Plato's *Banquet*. Socrates first tries to prove to Aristodemus the existence of *gods*, and this means in itself, of course, not the gods of the city. He uses what has later on been called the argument from *design*. This argument is also used in Book 4, chapter three. So these are the only theological chapters occurring in the *Memorabilia*. More precisely, they're the only chapters which are meant to show Socrates making people pious. But in that second discussion in the Fourth Book, the argument is strictly anthropocentric. Everything has been made for the benefit of man. There is, as you have seen last time—this is not the case here. Both chapters in their way throw some light on the fact mentioned by Xenophon in the first chapter: that Socrates did not consider the whole in the *manner* of most, but [he] implied in a different manner. Now let us see, there were a few points which we should perhaps read. In paragraph four. Can you read the beginning?

**Reader:** "Which, think you, deserve the greater admiration, the creators of phantoms without sense and motion, or the creators of living, intelligent, and active beings? Or, of living beings, by far, provided only they are created by design and not mere chance." (I.4.4)

**LS:** Yes, so this implies that Aristodemus was not merely refraining from sacrificing and using divination, but that he was, to say the least, uncertain whether there were any gods. In other

words, that he was guilty of that crime of which Socrates was suspected, namely, not even accused of not believing in any gods. Yes, and then how does he go on?

**Reader:** “Suppose that it is impossible to guess the purpose of one creature's existence, and obvious that another's serves a useful end, which, in your judgment, is the work of chance, and which of design? Presumably the creature that serves some useful end is the work of design.” (I.4.4)

**LS:** We could there translate this a little bit more literally. It is “becoming,” *prepei*. So it would be “becoming.” The doubt which is also expressed by the translation “presumably” has its reason that sometimes useful things *do* come about by chance, and they can be good enough as well as bad. Now in this paragraph here . . . you will see this clearer in the Greek than in the English translation . . . Socrates speaks of coming into being, and—I’m sorry, Aristodemus speaks of coming into being, and Socrates speaks of being, *esti*, *ontōn*. That we should at least notice. The indication is the species of the various kind of animals may not have come into being at all. The individuals, of course, have come into being. And therefore there is already—the question is *loaded* when the question is raised: Who *made* these species? Perhaps they were always; then there was no maker. Now in the sequel Socrates speaks of the various parts of the *human* body, how useful they are, and then of the usefulness of the various parts of *all* animals. Before he comes to speak of all animals, he makes that strange statement on hearing, at which we came to briefly. That is from paragraph six. Now, if you read the second half of paragraph six, when he speaks of the teeth. Do you have the passage with the teeth?

**Reader:** The teeth—

**LS:** Ya.

**Reader:** “Again, the incisors of all creatures are adapted for cutting, the molars for receiving food from them and grinding it. And again, the mouth, through which the food they—” (I.4.6)

**LS:** Oh, I’m sorry, hold on. Now before he speaks of the teeth, where he speaks of hearing.

**Reader:** “The ears catch all sounds, but are never choked with them.” (I.4.6)

**LS:** Ya. Here he still seems to speak of man in particular, and then in the sentence which Mr. Williamson just read, he clearly speaks of all animals, and that goes on in the rest of this passage. Now the question: One has to wonder whether Socrates doesn’t have in mind in particular *human* hearing: Is *man* exposed to everything he *hears* and cannot get enough of it? This would be not so wholly unintelligible as if it is applied to all animals. Let us look at Book 3, chapter five, paragraph nine. The paragraph, please.

**Reader:** “How then can we teach this? I think by reminding them that their earliest ancestors of whom we have any account—”

**LS:** Of whom we *hear*. Ya.

**Reader:** “of whom we hear were, as they themselves have been told the most valiant.” (III.5.9)

**LS:** Have *heard*, have heard.

**Reader:** Have heard. “Do you refer to the judgment of the gods, which Cecrops delivered in his court because of his virtue?” (III.5.10)

**LS:** Ya. That is, there is an emphasis also on hearing. Men are always exposed to what we call traditions, and they come primarily through hearing; and we will see whether this is sufficient for explanation for the dark passage, or if something else is involved. Now in the sequel, Aristodemus admits that if one looks at these things, at these animals, animals in general, in this way, they all seem to be the device of some wise and animal-loving artificer. And that is repeated also at the end of paragraph seven.

**Reader:** “What of the natural desire—”

**LS:** Now—no, one moment. No, here it is. There was another point which I think we should mention. So in other words, Aristodemus is here only convinced of the gods’ making all animals in general, and therefore <sup>9</sup>man in particular, but man in no different way than the other animals. But if the gods love animals . . . . But if the gods do not love man more than the other animals, the demands of piety are not fulfilled. Therefore, he begins a new argument and that begins in, or is limited to, paragraph eight.

**Reader:** “Do you think you have any wisdom yourself?”

“Oh! Ask me a question and judge from my answer.”

“And do you suppose that wisdom is nowhere else to be found, although you know that you have a mere speck of all the earth in your body and a mere drop of all the water, and that of all the other mighty elements you received, I suppose, just a scrap towards the fashioning of your body? But as for mind, which alone, it seems, is without mass, do you think that you snapped it up by a lucky accident, and that the orderly ranks of all these huge masses, infinite in number, are due, forsooth, to a sort of absurdity?” (I.4.8)

**LS:** So this is, in a way, the center of this chapter; surely the center of the demonstration. Afterwards he will speak of what the gods did for man in particular. And here Socrates speaks not only of beings on earth, but of the heavenly or *divine* beings. The concern here is with order, not with usefulness, with *taxis*, not *ōphelimon*, they are two different considerations. But surely the gods whose existence is proven in that way, or the god, are not obviously the gods of the city. This difficulty still remains. Now let us turn to paragraph fourteen. Socrates develops in the meantime the thought the gods have bestowed particular privileges on man, both on his body and his soul, and therefore he should be grateful to them. Yes?

**Reader:** “For is it not obvious to you that, in comparison with the other animals, men live like gods, by nature peerless both in body and in soul? For with a man's reason and the body of an ox we could not carry out our wishes, and the possession of hands without reason is of little worth. Do you, then, having received the two most precious gifts, yet think that the gods take no care of you? What are they to do, to make you believe that they are heedful of you?”

“I will believe when they send counsellors, as you declare they do, saying, ‘Do this, avoid that.’” (I.4.14)

**LS:** As they do to you.

**Mr. Williamson:** As they do to you.

**LS:** Ya, that is very important. And this, as we have seen last time, refers [to] Socrates’ *daimonion*. Socrates is sent such counsellors from the gods, and the sentence implies that Aristodemus did not believe it. If he had believed it, he would have believed in the gods, and the whole argument it seems would not be necessary. And this is all the more strange that this Aristodemus spent his whole day with Socrates and must have been the witness to many predictions of Socrates based on his *daimonion*. Now, if Aristodemus did not believe it, then one cannot blame other people who did not believe it. He must have seen that Socrates frequently predicted the truth, but that does not necessarily mean that he believed in his *daimonion*. He could simply have thought that Socrates is a very clever man, and a very good knower of human beings and situations, and guessed correctly.

Now here there is a parallel, not direct, but helpful, in Plato’s *Apology of Socrates*, 37e3 following. Socrates says: “Someone might say, ‘Why can’t you make this compromise? Keep quiet! Remain silent! And then we can tolerate you in Athens.’ But this is of all things most difficult to persuade you of. For when I say that, this, what you demand of me, would mean to be disobedient to the god, and therefore it is impossible to be quiet, then you would not believe me and think that I’m speaking ironically. But when I say that it’s all, man’s greatest good is this: every day to make speeches about virtue, and the other things about which you hear me conversing, and examining myself and others, and the unexamined life is not worth living for man. Of this, I could persuade you still less.”<sup>ii</sup> So the reference to the Delphic oracle here is more credible than the truth: that Socrates regards the unexamined life as unworthy for man. And yet even this more credible assertion, that he has a mission from the god in Delphi, even that will not [be] believed, and they would say he speaks ironically. And you can make your application to the *daimonion*, of which he does not speak here and which he does not mean here; very simply, this could very well be an ironical, or could be understood to be an ironical, statement for something which is for a man like Aristodemus indeed *more* credible than the *daimonion*, namely, that Socrates had this natural gift of seeing ahead. Yes?

**Reader:** “But when the Athenians inquire of them by divination and they reply, do you not suppose that to you, too, the answer is given? Or when they send portents for warning to the Greeks, or to all the world? Are you their one exception, the only one consigned to neglect? Or do you suppose—” (I.4.15)

**LS:** What does he mean by this, what gods send to all men, as distinguished from the Athenians or the Greeks in particular? We have seen a specimen in the *Oeconomicus*: the rain and its importance for sowing. This is an information given by the god to man about the right time for sowing. Yes?

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<sup>ii</sup> Strauss’s translation.

**Reader:** “Or do you suppose that the gods would have put into man a belief in their ability to help and harm, if they had not that power—”

**LS:** Let us translate this a bit more literally. Do you believe that the gods would have instilled in man the opinion that they were able to do well or ill if they were not able? There is an ambiguity here: If they were not able to do good or ill, or to instill that opinion, they might have instilled an opinion about their power which is not true. Read this from the beginning again, please.

**Reader:** “Or do you suppose that the gods would have put into man an opinion in their ability to do well or ill, if they were not able, and that man throughout the ages would never have detected the fraud?”

**LS:** Ya. Well, what about Aristodemus himself, to say nothing of what the people thought of the philosophers in general? So that is not so simple. Yes?

**Reader:** “Do you not see that the wisest and most enduring of human institutions, cities and nations, are most god-fearing, and that the most thoughtful period of life is the most religious?” (I.4.16)

**LS:** Well, is most concerned with the gods. Ya, well, one can have different opinions about old age. And even Socrates expresses elsewhere in this very book the opinion that old age is not necessarily the best age for understanding things. We might read in Book 4, chapter four, paragraph eight. But the thought is, of course, very well known—Cephalus at the beginning of the *Republic* and also in the Tenth Book of Plato’s *Laws* this thought is developed: that old people are the most god-fearing, but that does not necessarily settle the question. Yes?

**Reader:** “Be well assured, my good friend, that the mind within you directs your body according to its will—”

**LS:** Yes, he says that *thy* mind, being in *thy* body, *ho sos nous*, this expression is ridiculed by Socrates, not in Xenophon but in the *Philebus*.<sup>iii</sup> There is not thy mind. Whether there is any connection, I do not know. Yes?

**Reader:** “and equally you must think that Thought indwelling in the Universal disposes all things according to its pleasure.”

**LS:** Ya, here he goes on from *nous* to *phronēsis*. Yes?

**Reader:** “For think not that your eye can travel over many furlongs and yet god's eye cannot see the whole world at once; that your soul—”

**LS:** Everything at once, ya? Everything at once.

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<sup>iii</sup> Plato, *Philebus* 22c.

**Reader:** “that your soul can ponder on things in Egypt and in Sicily, and god's thought is not sufficient to pay heed to the whole world at once, all things at once.” (I.4.17)

**LS:** Yes. So this <sup>10</sup>seems to be the completion of the argument. But a new paragraph is added.

**Reader:** “Nay, but just as by serving men you find out who is willing to serve you in return, by being kind who will be kind to you in return, and by taking counsel, discover the masters of thought, so try the gods by serving them, and see whether they will vouchsafe to counsel you in matters hidden from man. Then you will know that such is the greatness and such the nature of the deity that he sees all things and hears all things alike, and is present in all places and heedful of all things.” (I.4.18)

**LS:** So that's the final point of this. If, in addition to all these considerations you have been given, you *worship* the gods, then you will see some *additional* things, and these additional things are the gods *hearing* and *caring* for all things. Here hearing comes up again. Why is this hearing so important in this connection? What are the gods supposed to hear? Surely all things, but some things in particular, some sounds in particular: prayers. Now, there are millions of prayers ascending from human beings to the gods at all times. And the gods must surely <sup>11</sup>be able to receive all these sounds and never become filled with them. And so then from this point of view, the hearing, as described earlier in this strange passage—[the]<sup>12</sup> passage which we have discussed—would then be the most god-like of the human senses. Nothing of this kind is said here of any other sense. Differently stated, this is also implied: only the people who are actually pious will ever know that the gods hear everything and are everywhere present. This is the conclusion of this argument. So the gods *see* everything and *hear* everything, but this is not a complete distinction, disjunction [between] seeing and hearing, or the things visible or audible. There's something else, as we have seen at the end of chapter one: the speeches, the deeds, and the silent thoughts. What about them? That is not clear from this passage, to put it mildly. And now let us read the conclusion.

**Reader:** “To me at least it seemed that by these sayings he kept his companions from impiety, injustice, and baseness, and that not only when they were seen by men, but even in solitude; since they ever felt that no deed of theirs could at any time escape the gods.” (I.4.19)

**LS:** Deeds, and the other question regarding the silent thoughts is not mentioned. Thus <sup>13</sup>that means men *fear* to be punished by the gods for impious or unjust actions. So the gods must be *just*, must be concerned with justice. The argument contains nothing, says nothing whatever about the gods being concerned with justice. <sup>14</sup>To come back to the context, the immediate context, this final reflection of Xenophon must of course also be applied to Aristodemus, and nothing is said about the effect of this conversation on Aristodemus. This again is left out. So I believe that these considerations which I proposed explain this mysterious reference to hearing earlier in this chapter. You look—so?

**Student:** Mr. Strauss, I didn't quite get what you said, why is it so important for men to hear. I understand for god it is important to hear what is said.

**LS:** Traditions. Ya, traditions. Ya.

**Student:** Yes. Yes, I understand. On the other hand, in the Bible it is to hear, to hearken.

**LS:** Yes, sure, it has this double meaning. But it doesn't have that in Greek. There is a different word. So this was a new discussion of piety, and the next chapter deals naturally with continence, ya? Shall we read, then, or is there any point you would like to raise regarding chapter four?

**Student:** Mr. Strauss, I didn't understand what you said about the connection, the importance of paragraph eight, in the argument with Aristodemus.

**LS:** Because this refers to the universe—as we say, the whole—and not to the animals, i.e. the terrestrial beings, in particular, as the other, to which the other argument refers.

**Student:** Is that only to show Aristodemus that the gods can do—if they want to do something they can, since they have the power over us.

**LS:** No, the argument does not say that the gods *have* made the universe, but they are responsible somehow for the order there. They keep it in order. And I think the point in the context of the *Memorabilia* is that here Socrates speaks of the universe, and the first chapter almost suggested that Socrates never discussed the heavenly or divine things. The argument is also entirely different than the one taken from design or utility, as you can see. Here one can say he proves the existence of a world-mind from the analogy of the other ingredients of man: just as man contains a certain amount of earth, a certain amount of water, and so on, and yet this is only tiny parts of the water and the earth and so on that exists in the world; the mind in man is only a tiny part of the mind which exists in the universe.

**Student:** I still don't quite—I understand, I think I understand what you're saying about the character of his treatment of the relationship between the gods and the universe. But what, what is it specifically that that is supposed, why does he introduce that in, in his argument with Aristodemus? How does that help him? How is that supposed to help lead him to piety?

**LS:** Well, later on, at the end of the chapter, he seems to come back to this subject in a different way. And <sup>15</sup>in paragraph 17, he alludes to that by speaking of thy mind, and thy body, thus reminding us of *the* mind and the body of the whole, and then he replaces mind by prudence or wisdom, *phronesis*. So the god's knowledge of everything and caring for everything, that is connected. But there, I think that what I had in mind was that it is in the center of the argument, this one. As far as I remember it is absent from the second discussion, in Book 4, chapter three. So let us now turn then to chapter five?

[break in tape]

**LS:** I translate this by continence, if continence too is a noble and good possession for a *man*, let us, ya, let us consider whether he advanced people by saying, in respect of continence, something like the following: “Men”—see, he addresses the hearers immediately afterwards: you



men, male human beings, *hombres*. You will see later on, in the course of this chapter, what this means. Ya?

**Reader:** “Men, if we were at war and wanted to choose a leader most capable of helping us to save ourselves and conquer the enemy, should we choose one whom we knew to be the slave of the belly, or of wine, or lust, or sleep? How could we expect that such a one would either save us or defeat the enemy? Or if at the end of our life we should wish to appoint a guardian to educate our boys or protect our girls or to take care of our goods, should we think a loose liver a trustworthy man to choose?” (I.5.1-2)

**LS:** It is a bit—the Greek word which he translates “protect” means also “to watch over.” So the education is limited to the boys in these benighted ages, ya? The girls have to be watched. In backwards parts of the world this view existed even in the nineteenth century—the twentieth century, ya?

**Student:** I’m sorry, could you—what word?

**LS:** *Diaphylaxai*, here in paragraph two, ya? *Diaphylaxai*.

**Student:** And what is the specific meaning?

**LS:** It can be translated by “protect,” but it means also “to watch over one.” Ya.

**Reader:** “Should we entrust live stock or storehouses or the management of works to a vicious slave? Should we be willing—” (I.5.2)

**LS:** Vicious is “to an incontinent slave.” The subject is here incontinence throughout this chapter.

**Reader:** “Should we be willing to take as a gift a page or an errand-boy with such a character? Surely then, if we should refuse an incontinent slave, the master must look to it that he does not grow incontinent himself?” (I.5.3)

**LS:** Yes. So there are three cases, examples, which he gives: the general, the executor of a will, and slaves. And in all cases, incontinence—from the top to the bottom, in all cases incontinence is most undesirable. And if it is undesirable even on the lowest level, then of course it applies especially to youth. Yes?

**Reader:** “For whereas the covetous, by robbing other men of their goods, seem to enrich themselves, an incontinent man reaps no advantage from the harm he does to others. If he is a worker of mischief to others, he brings much greater mischief on himself, if indeed the greatest mischief of all is to ruin not one's home merely, but the body and the soul.” (I.5.3)

**LS:** So in other words, continence is compatible with avarice or greed, but this doesn’t need any particular proof. So continence does not guarantee *virtue*. It is a condition of virtue but not a

virtue. And well, you remember the discussion <sup>16</sup>in the *Oeconomicus*, where they said how good love of *gain* is for making people continent, for making slaves or stewards continent. Yes?

**Reader:** <sup>17</sup>“In social intercourse what pleasure could you find in such a man, knowing that he prefers your sauces and your wines to your friends, and likes the women better than the company?” (I.5.4)

**LS:** The women you can translate as prostitutes, ya? Yes.

**Reader:** “Should not every man hold self-control to be the foundation of all virtue, and first lay this foundation firmly in his soul?” (I.5.4)

**LS:** So the *foundation* of all virtue, which means it is not a virtue. <sup>18</sup>Later on, in the Fourth Book, <sup>19</sup>Xenophon says that Socrates laid the foundation *first* in piety and justice, and then after they acquired these qualities, these virtues, then he took care of their becoming continent. Here it is said continence first. And that is of some importance. Now there is another indication: if it is the foundation of virtue and not itself a virtue, then it is *good* but not *noble*, it lacks the splendor. And then we see that the first sentence of this chapter, which is a conditional clause, is perfectly in order. *If* continence is a noble and good possession for a man. It is not noble. Good, yes. Ya?

**Reader:** “For who without this can learn any good or practise it worthily? Or what man that is the slave of his pleasures is not in an evil plight body and soul alike? From my heart I declare that every free man—”

**LS:** He says, “by Hera.” He is speaking to men, to male men. And he uses here the women’s oath “by Hera.”

**Reader:** “By Hera, I declare that every free man should pray not to have such a man among his slaves; and every man who is a slave to such pleasures should entreat the gods to give him good masters: thus, and only thus, may he find salvation.” (I.5.5)

**LS:** Ya, there is prayer, but it differs from the standard prayer of Socrates, as you see, because here people pray or ask to pray for specific things. And therefore they cannot—of which it was said in chapter three, one cannot know whether it is good for one to have them; <sup>20</sup>rather, one should only pray that the gods should give one what is good for one, they knowing better than oneself. Yes.

**Reader:** “Such were his words; but his own self-control was shown yet more clearly by his deeds than by his words.”

**LS:** Ya, how can one be continent in speech? In deed it is easy. But there is perhaps the possibility of being continent in speeches, not . . . refusing to *say* some things which one has an *urge* to say. Could this not also be a kind of continence? He turns to something else.

**Reader:** “For he kept in subjection not only the pleasures of the body, but those too that money brings, in the belief that he who takes money from any casual giver puts himself under a master and endures the basest form of slavery.” (I.5.6)

**LS:** Ya. So that continence, then, includes also the continence regarding money, although it means primarily the continence regarding the desires of the body. Now this was a harangue of Socrates, not a conversation. And that is of some importance for the plan of this Book, because chapter seven, the last chapter of Book 1, is again a harangue. One can say—in chapter five nothing is said *who* the addressees are, whether these were the companions, [whether] they were those with Socrates, *synontes*, or other people, that is not clear. But continence, to repeat the most important point, continence can be the basis of vice, of certain vices, and therefore it is only the *basis*, the *foundation*, of virtue.

**Student:** What’s the Greek word for continence?

**LS:** Pardon?

**Student:** What is the Greek word for continence?

**LS:** One of the words is *enkrateia*. Now, one has to make up one’s mind how to translate, and Aristotle’s usage is entirely different. <sup>21</sup>What Xenophon means by continence, Aristotle calls that moderation, the virtue regarding the sensual pleasures. And *enkrateia* means in Aristotle having desires for bad things but being able to control oneself. The truly continent man does not have any desire for these things, according to Aristotle. Do you understand the difference?

**Student:** Yes.

**LS:** So <sup>22</sup>what Xenophon speaks of is something entirely different. Continence, self-control regarding one’s sensual pleasures, is the condition of virtue, and because it is only the condition, it is also the condition of vice. It excludes *certain* vices, surely, but not all vices. The lucrative vices can very well be based on continence. But in the wider sense, when continence is meant to include also continence regarding money, then the miser or the greedy man would be incontinent, that is true. Xenophon—regarding the other word, moderation, *sophrosyne*, this is for Xenophon the combination of piety and justice. It has nothing to do with the sensual desires in particular. And what Xenophon does throughout his work, surely throughout the *Memorabilia*, is that mostly or frequently he uses the two terms—moderation and continence, *sophrosyne* and *enkrateia*—synonymously. But then there are passages where he clearly distinguishes them, and the simple, the clearest proof that they are distinguished is this: that the vice opposed to *sophrosyne*, to moderation, is not incontinence, *akrateia*, but *hubris* or *mania*, insolent pride, or madness.

**Student:** I was wondering, is there any—in there, you commented on the remark in section six about the—that is, he showed himself to be more—

**LS:** Continent.

**Student:** . . . Continent by his deeds than through his words, I mean, is there a suggestion that he was incontinent in words, sometimes?

**LS:** Pardon?

**Student:** Is there a suggestion that he might have been on some occasions incontinent in his words?

**LS:** Perhaps, but also one could say it is relatively easy to be continent in speeches, meaning a preacher of continence, ya? And the difficult thing is to be continent in deed. And therefore to be continent, a preacher of continence, is not a great deal of continence.

**Student:** Isn't the whole point of continence to be incontinent in thought and therefore in *logos*, at least for Socrates?

**LS:** Ya, but the question—I think it would only refer to speeches, not to thinking. Thinking cannot be limited. So it can only be—but speech can be limited by various considerations.

**Student:** But doesn't one have to qualify that, because doesn't, I mean, doesn't the *enkrateia* even for the sensible appetites or desires, doesn't that depend on a certain *enkrateia* in thought? That is to say—

**LS:** Yes, that is a very long question, and it seems that Socrates had said, or suggested [that] if one is reasonable, *phronimos*, one can never be incontinent. So that this difficulty, that one sees that a certain course of action is the right one but is tempted beyond endurance to do the opposite, <sup>23</sup>is impossible from this point of view. Insight, reason, however you call it, is so strong that nothing can resist it; and therefore this word, there are the famous verses from the *Medea* of Seneca, "I see the better things and I approve of them, but I follow the worse courses."<sup>iv</sup> Now that would be impossible: she would not see them, [that] would have to be said on the basis of these Socratic statements, and Aristotle has a long discussion in the *Ethics*.

**Student:** Yeah, but I meant it in a simpler way, that someone who is very incontinent usually has to, probably has to train his thoughts somewhat as well as his actions, even to become continent on a low level.

**LS:** Ya, what do you mean by that? Do you mean a kind of gourmet?

**Student [interrupting]:** What?

**LS:** Do you mean the intelligence possessed by a gourmet who makes fine distinctions between the various kinds of food and drink? Or what do you mean?

**Student:** No [laughing], I meant someone who might be tending towards obesity, and then simply forces himself to think instead of the next piece of pie, something else, a cigarette—

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<sup>iv</sup> Paraphrased from Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Bk. VII: 1-73.

**LS:** I see. Ya, ya.

**Student:** [Laughter] Or, you know, some task that he has to do, or the fear of heart trouble, or some kind of, I really mean it on a low level. It seems to me—

**LS:** Ya, well, if even—

**Student:** It seems to me even there an exercise of thought, some kind of exercise.

**LS:** Ya, surely, but the question—and one could say: If even this is possible, why should it not be possible to be continent on higher grounds?

**Student:** To be what?

**LS:** To be continent on higher grounds. But the question is: What happens to someone who is incontinent and knows that it is bad? Can he know? And Socrates seems to have said or suggested that this is impossible. Well, let's go to the next chapter.

**Reader:** “It is due to him that a conversation he had with Antiphon the Sophist should not go unrecorded.” (I.6.1)

**LS:** Now this is the only conversation between Socrates and the man called a sophist in the whole work. There is later on a conversation between Socrates and Hippias, a famous sophist, but Hippias is not called a sophist there. Who this [is]—there are two Antiphons, and it's very hard to say which of the two is the Antiphon here. There was a teacher of Thucydides, a rhetorician who was called Antiphon, and then there was also a man who wrote theoretical treatises, treatise about justice and such things. It is hard to say.

**Student:** Is it clear that they're both different?

**LS:** Pardon?

**Student:** Is it clear that they're both, that they're both different teachers? [Louder] Is it clear that they are both different, the teacher of Thucydides and the teach—?

**LS:** I do—even that I do not know. There is, that I do not know. But <sup>24</sup>apparently there are some differences regarding the times in which they flourished. Ya, shall we move on then?

**Reader:** “Antiphon came to Socrates with the intention of drawing his companions away from him—” (I.6.2)

**LS:** Yes, the term which he uses here for “companions”—*synousiastas*—never occurs again. It would seem to be a more intensive form of companions. Perhaps one should say “his closest companions” or “his constant companions.” Ya?

**Reader:** and spoke thus in their presence.”

**LS:** Ya, that is also remarkable. Most of the time he says “in about this manner,” but here <sup>25</sup>he claims that this is literal.

**Reader:** “Socrates, I supposed that philosophy must add to one's store of happiness. But the fruits you have reaped from philosophy are apparently very different. For example, you are living a life that would drive even a slave to desert his master. Your meat and drink are of the poorest; the cloak you wear is not only a poor thing, but is never changed summer or winter; and you never wear shoes or tunic. Besides you refuse to take money, the mere getting of which is a joy, while its possession makes one more independent and happier. Now the professors of other subjects try to make their pupils copy their teachers: if you too intend to make your companions do that, you must consider yourself a professor of unhappiness.” (I.6.2-3)

**LS:** Ya, this is something which is said of Socrates, almost in this form, in the *Clouds*:  
*Kakodaimōn* Socrates, miserable Socrates.<sup>v</sup>

**Reader:** To this Socrates replied:

“Antiphon, you seem to have a notion that my life is so miserable, that I feel sure you would choose death in preference to a life like mine. Come then, let us consider together what hardship you have noticed in my life. Is it that those who take money are bound to carry out the work for which they get a fee, while I, because I refuse to take it, am not obliged to talk with anyone against my will?” (I.6.4-5)

**LS:** Ya, that is important, I think [we spoke] of this before, but there is <sup>26</sup>no harm in repeating it. Socrates, contrary to some suggestions of Xenophon and of Plato, was very selective regarding the people to whom he talked. He did not wish to talk to all people. But since he was a very urbane and polite man, when he was *forced* to talk to someone whom he had no wish to talk, he talked of course to him. Say, *Euthyphro* in the Platonic dialogues, that was not Socrates' desire to talk to him, it was imposed on him. But when you see on the other hand, the *Charmides*, in the beginning, it is clear that Socrates tended towards that gymnasium in which he found Charmides and the others. Yes?

**Reader:**

“Or do you think my food poor because it is less wholesome than yours or less nourishing? Or because my viands are harder to get than yours, being scarcer and more expensive? Or because your diet is more enjoyable than mine? Do you not know that the greater the enjoyment of eating the less the need of sauce; the greater the enjoyment of drinking, the less the desire for drinks that are not available? As for cloaks, they are changed, as you know, on account of cold or heat. And shoes are worn as a protection to the feet against pain and inconvenience in walking. Now did you ever know me to stay indoors more than others on account of the cold, or to fight with any man for the shade because of the heat, or to be prevented from walking anywhere by sore feet? Do you not know that by training, a puny weakling comes to be better at any form of exercise he

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<sup>v</sup> Aristophanes, *Clouds*, 90-132.

practises, and gets more staying power, than the muscular prodigy who neglects to train? Seeing then that I am always training my body to answer any and every call on its powers, do you not think that I can stand every strain better than you can without training? For avoiding slavery to the belly or to sleep and incontinence, is there, think you, any more effective specific than the possession of other and greater pleasures, which are delightful not only to enjoy, but also because they arouse hopes of lasting benefit?" (1.VI.4-8)

**LS:** So here you see, continence for what, is asked. There is something for which it pays to be continent, and not merely the considerations of which Mr. Berns spoke, and which of which he himself admitted that they are not the most important. Yes?

**Reader:**

"And again, you surely know that while he who supposes that nothing goes well with him is unhappy, he who believes that he is successful in farming or a shipping concern or any other business he is engaged in is happy in the thought of his prosperity. Do you think then that out of all this thinking there comes anything so pleasant as the thought: 'I am growing in goodness and I am making better friends?' And that, I may say, is my constant thought. Further, if help is wanted by friends or city, which of the two has more leisure to supply their needs, he who lives as I am living or he whose life you call happy? Which will find soldiering the easier task, he who cannot exist without expensive food or he who is content with what he can get? Which when besieged will surrender first, he who wants what is very hard to come by or he who can make shift with whatever is at hand? You seem, Antiphon, to imagine that happiness consists in luxury and extravagance. But my belief is that to have no wants is divine; to have as few as possible comes next to the divine—" (I.6.8-10)

**LS:** Yes. Now <sup>27</sup>the theme which is here contining is continence. But as we see from the sequel, here continence is presented as the basis of Socrates' whole way of life; and that is a unique chapter, therefore, and the uniqueness is indicated by the uniqueness of certain terms of which I spoke. Now this powerful statement with which Socrates ends may very well have been a statement of Antiphon himself. There is a fragment ascribed to him exactly to this effect: that the divine is without any needs, and the . . . . But Xenophon does these things from time to time. We will see next time that there is a story told by Prodicus the Wise of Heracles at the crossroads, which Xenophon, or Xenophon's Socrates, boldly takes over, only depriving it of *certain* rhetorical ornaments which Prodicus had given it. And so it could very well be that this is taken from Antiphon . . . this statement is not only—it occurs also in Euripides,<sup>vi</sup> so it doesn't have to come from anyone, but it does not have to come from Antiphon in particular. But if Antiphon did say it, that would give the passage some pungency which it otherwise lacks. So that is clear. So let us answer this then: Is continence is more conducive to happiness than the way of life of Antiphon? Yes, let's go on.

**Reader:**

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<sup>vi</sup> Euripides, *Heracles*, 1341.

“and as that which is divine is supreme, so that which approaches nearest to its nature is nearest to the supreme.”

In another conversation with Socrates Antiphon said:

“Socrates, I for my part believe you to be a just, but by no means a wise man. And I think you realise it yourself. Anyhow, you decline to take money for your society. Yet if you, you believed your cloak or house or anything you possess to be worth money, you would not part with it for nothing or even for less than its value. Consider, then, if you set any value on your society, you would insist on getting the proper price for that too. It may well be that you are a just man because you do not cheat people through avarice; but wise you cannot be, since your knowledge is not worth anything.” (1.VI.11-12)

**LS:** Yes. So this is a somewhat *refined* form of Antiphon’s attack on Socrates: just but not wise. Now let us read the reply . . . .

**Reader:** To this Socrates replied:

“Antiphon, it is common opinion among us in regard to beauty—”

**LS:** Now the us, common, the simplest would be Athenians. But Antiphon was also Athenian. Should he mean a certain part of Athenians or a certain part of human beings? That is not clear. Yes?

**Student:** I’m sorry, but I couldn’t hear that.

**LS:** It is most natural to think, “with us Athenians,” but Antiphon himself is an Athenian. Or is Antiphon excluded from the Athenians by virtue of his activity, of his being a sophist? Perhaps it means “with us”; from the context, it would appear “with us Athenian gentlemen.” Yes?

**Reader:** “it is common opinion among us in regard to beauty and wisdom that there is an honourable and a shameful way of bestowing them. For to offer one’s beauty for money to all comers is called prostitution; but we think it virtuous to become friendly with a lover who is known to be a man of honour. So it is with wisdom. Those who—” (I.6.13)

**LS:** That is very nice in the original, because Socrates comes over from the first to the third person plural when he speaks of a pejorative term, then, “they call him a male prostitute,” not “we,” that would be too impolite, Socrates talking to Antiphon. Yes?

**Reader:** “So is it with wisdom. Those who offer it to all comers for money are known as sophists, prostitutes of wisdom, but we think that he who makes a friend of one whom he knows to be gifted by nature, and teaches him all the good he can, fulfils the duty of a citizen and a gentleman. That is my own view, Antiphon.” (I.6.13)

**LS:** Yes, now <sup>28</sup>that is a point which—Socrates will explain what this means: to make a gifted man one’s friend. That seems to be the characteristic difference between Socrates and the sophist. The sophist accepts everyone who has money as a companion, Socrates accepts only these gifted men, and with the intention not to make them clever but to make them good friends. Yes?



**Reader:** “Others have a fancy for a good horse or dog or bird: my fancy, stronger even than theirs, is for good friends. And I teach them all the good I can, and recommend them to others from whom I think they will get some moral benefit.” (I.6.14)

**LS:** If from whom they believe they will be assisted toward virtue. Ya.

**Reader:** “All<sup>vii</sup> the treasures that the wise men of old have left us in their writings I open and explore with my friends. If we come on any good thing, we extract it, and we set much store on being useful to one another.”

“For my part, when I heard these words fall from his lips, I judged him to be a happy man himself and to be putting his hearers in the way of being gentlemen.” (I.6.14)

**LS:** Yes, I would translate the adjective here by “blessed,” and that is used only here of Socrates. So that <sup>29</sup>when Xenophon speaks of Socrates’ *blissful* activity, with a view to it he calls Socrates blessed. And this blissful activity, as you see, consists in his reading, together with his friends, the books in which the wise men of old have laid down their treasures. The books themselves are not their treasures. And when they find something good, they cull it and regard it as a great gain when we become friends to one another. So in other words, the good friend is the only friend. Friend is a word which has very many meanings, but in an emphatic sense only the good friend, and what Socrates understands by a good friend is explained here. There is not a single example in Xenophon’s Socratic writings of Socrates being engaged in his blissful activity. That agrees with other silences of Xenophon which we have observed before. Xenophon *points* to the true Socrates, to Socrates as he was <sup>30</sup>with his most *intimate* friends, but he does not present him. And we <sup>31</sup>must think about these various things which he mentions. For example, we must wonder, how is this reading, all the reading of the books of the wise men of old, what does this have to do with raising the question, “what *is*?” regarding the human things? Because if Socrates raised the question, “what *is*?” regarding the human things at all times, he would raise it also when reading these books. And one must think about what this, how the “what *is*?” question comes up in reading these books. It is not specified who the wise men of old are. That can mean the philosophers, can mean the poets, can mean legislators. That is left here entirely open.

Good friends and friends are something different. Good friends, in the strict sense, are described here. Friends are people in a mutual relation of —

[break in tape]

—the person has to be gifted. That is of some importance, because later on there are seven chapters devoted to the subject friendship, and one must therefore keep this question in mind. There is a certain occasion when a notorious sycophant, Archidemus, was hired at Socrates’ advice by Crito, the famous Crito, as a counter-sycophant against the sycophants who troubled Crito. And then Crito was very happy, and Archidemus, it is said, was honored by Crito and by the other friends, wealthy friends, of Crito. Was Archidemus honored by Socrates <sup>32</sup>or was Socrates—which is the question implied—was Socrates in the *deeper* sense of the word a friend

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<sup>vii</sup> In translation: “And”

of Crito? That is a question. Xenophon makes very few indications of who the true friends are. The only unmistakable reference is to Plato. There are people in Socrates' entourage that are well known up to the present day, but it is hard to say whether they were his friends, people like Antisthenes the founder of the Cynic school, or Aristippus, the founder of the Cyrenaic school, and other people. That is the question. The case is, I think, unambiguous—[no,] the case of Plato, I think, is unambiguous. Come, let us finish this chapter.

**Reader:** “On yet another occasion Antiphon asked him: ‘How can you suppose that you make politicians of others, when you yourself avoid politics even if you understand them?’  
 “‘How now, Antiphon?’ he retorted, ‘should I play a more important part in politics by engaging in them alone or by taking pains to turn out as many competent politicians as possible?’” (I.6.15)

**LS:** We have read this before, and we have seen there, Book 1, chapter two, paragraph 48, where Socrates, where Xenophon mentions as the true associates of Socrates, Crito and some others who were, led a private life, they did not go into politics. Now, how to reconcile these two passages? . . . political ambition, and those who had much. That distinction is similar to the distinction between the good friends and those who were not good friends, but the two distinctions are not identical. Xenophon did not say of the true associates in that paragraph 48, that they were gifted men. So <sup>33</sup>these are two different distinctions *among* the companions, and we must find our way there. It is most urgent in the case of the friends because there are these chapters in the Second Book, Socrates and the friends, and his friends in particular. There are no chapters on Socrates and the political men—there are, but they have the title, “Socrates and Those Who Desired the Noble Things”; but whereas he exhorts people to friendship and to the right way of acquiring that, he does not exhort them to strive for the noble things, i.e., for political office, except in one case, and that case is Charmides, who was apparently a gifted man but who was unfortunately one of the Thirty Tyrants later. So then Socrates, from this point of view, would have been responsible, co-responsible, for the Thirty Tyrants.

[end of tape]

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<sup>1</sup> Deleted “LS: Well— Mr. Williamson: I don’t know where, you must talk first. LS: Well, somewhere in chapter 4. What’s the time? It’s not 4 o’clock?”

<sup>2</sup> Deleted “the”

<sup>3</sup> Deleted “though”

<sup>4</sup> Deleted “there is reflection”

<sup>5</sup> Deleted “when”

<sup>6</sup> Deleted “was this”

<sup>7</sup> Deleted “Xenophon”

<sup>8</sup> Deleted “from”

<sup>9</sup> Deleted “of”

<sup>10</sup> Deleted “seems to have”

<sup>11</sup> Deleted “have”

<sup>12</sup> Deleted “which”

<sup>13</sup> Deleted “these, the gods”

<sup>14</sup> Deleted “it”

<sup>15</sup> Deleted “he speaks”

<sup>16</sup> Deleted “of”

<sup>17</sup> Deleted “‘If he is a.’ Excuse me.”

<sup>18</sup> Deleted “in”

<sup>19</sup> Deleted “here”

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- <sup>20</sup> Deleted “one should”  
<sup>21</sup> Deleted “Aristotle calls”  
<sup>22</sup> Deleted “we”  
<sup>23</sup> Deleted “becomes”  
<sup>24</sup> Deleted “there”  
<sup>25</sup> Deleted “he says”  
<sup>26</sup> Deleted “it is”  
<sup>27</sup> Deleted “here is”  
<sup>28</sup> Deleted “this is”  
<sup>29</sup> Deleted “Socrates”  
<sup>30</sup> Deleted “in his”  
<sup>31</sup> Deleted “must turn”  
<sup>32</sup> Deleted “and”  
<sup>33</sup> Deleted “we must”

## Session 11: no date

**Leo Strauss:** Well, I think we can now begin. And we must remind ourselves again of the context, and that is especially important when we turn to chapter seven of the First Book. But let us—still there was some minor difficulty already in chapter six, the preceding chapter. On the whole, chapters three up to chapter one of the Second Book inclusively, deal with piety and continence in this order. Now <sup>1</sup>we have given a simple explanation for that: Xenophon, after having refuted the indictment which consists of two parts, by proving that Socrates was a) pious, b) continent, continues that beyond, for quite a few chapters. But this is perhaps not sufficient, because while this explains how the two subjects—piety and continence—were suggested to Xenophon, this doesn't show why he chooses them. There must be a more precise reason. Now, if we look at the plan of the *Memorabilia* as a whole, a plan which is not explicitly stated at the beginning of the sections anywhere, we can say that these first chapters, three of the First Book, [through] chapter one of the Second Book, deal with the man himself. That may mean Socrates himself; it may also mean what Socrates recommended to the man himself regarding his *duties* towards himself. But obviously, piety and continence are not the whole duty of man. There are at least three virtues missing: justice, courage, and wisdom.

Now justice, one can say, is taken care of since the whole *Memorabilia* deals with Socrates' justice. As for courage, that is strangely never mentioned among Socrates' virtues, and that is a question by itself, but we can take this as a datum. So now the preceding chapter, which we have read last time, which dealt especially with Socrates' blissful activity, dealt precisely with Socrates' wisdom. For what Antiphon objected to was that Socrates was indeed just, since he didn't take money for his worthless teaching, but not wise, because his teaching was worthless. And Socrates' reply to that proves, then, although not explicitly, that he was wise; and therefore we can say chapter six shows, deals with wisdom as based on continence, as used for continence. So this, the irregularity of chapter six, may be accounted for in this manner. But chapter seven is an entirely different story. And I think we just begin to read.

**Reader:** Let us next consider whether by discouraging imposture he encouraged his companions to cultivate virtue. (1.VII.1)

**LS:** Ya. Now, ya, encouraged or exhorted, whether by dehorting from boasting, he exhorted his companions to take care of virtue. Xenophon does not say, again, as he did before on some occasion, that Socrates was successful in his exhortations. [It's]<sup>2</sup> presented as something which the reader must consider and form a judgment for himself. And the subject now is boasting. And—yes.

**Reader:** For he always said that the best road to glory is the way that gives a man as good as he wishes to be thought, [correcting his misstatement] that makes a man as good as he wishes to be thought. (I.7.1)

**LS:** Perhaps we'll consider the difference of expression here. That there is no more beautiful, no more resplendent road to fame than the one through which one would become *good* in that in which one would *wish* to have renown. Fame, reputation, that is, has to do with splendor, with

the noble, with the fine, as distinguished from the more solid good, which is described, indicated by the term “good.” Yes. And now he argues that out.

**Mr. Williamson:** And this was how he demonstrated the truth of this saying:

“Suppose a bad flute-player wants to be thought a good one, let us note what he must do. Must he not imitate good players in the accessories of the art? First, as they wear fine clothes and travel with many attendants, he must do the same. Further, seeing that they win the applause of crowds, he must provide himself with a large claque. But, of course, he must never accept an engagement, or he will promptly expose himself to ridicule as an incompetent player and an impostor to boot.” (I.7.2)

**LS:** Ya, that is, not only a bad *player* but also a boastful man. After all, a man may be a bad player without being boastful. Yes?

**Mr. Williamson:** “And so, what with incurring heavy expense and gaining nothing, and bringing disgrace on himself as well, he will make his life burdensome, unprofitable and ridiculous.” (I.7.2)

**LS:** Ya. By this is in our language, language of our time with the . . . we could say, with the man concerned with his *image* rather than with the substance, and one sees what happens if that concern with the image predominates. Yes?

**Mr. Williamson:** “So too if a man who isn’t, who is not a general or a pilot wanted to be thought a good one, let us imagine what would happen to him. If his efforts to seem proficient in these duties failed to carry conviction, would not his failure be galling to him? If they succeeded, would not his success be still more disastrous? for it is certain that if a man who knew nothing about piloting a ship or commanding an army were appointed to such work, he would lose these, he would lose those whom he least wanted to lose and would bring ruin and disgrace upon himself.” (I.7.3)

**LS:** So first <sup>3</sup>Xenophon’s Socrates spoke of the relatively harmless case of the player, flute player, and now he turns to the grave cases where failure <sup>4</sup>does not only make a man ridiculous, but ruins him and his city, or his subordinates. That is the case of the general and of the pilot. Yes.

**Reader:** By similar reasoning he would show how unprofitable is a reputation for wealth or courage or strength when it is undeserved. “Tasks beyond their powers,” he would say, “are laid on the incompetent, and no mercy is shown to them when they disappoint the expectation formed of their capability.” (I.7.4)

**LS:** Yes, he gives here three examples again: wealth, courage, and strength. What about wisdom? If the people are sufficiently wise, I suppose he would make himself utterly ridiculous before he is put to a test. What about justice? If a man pretends to be just without being just, what would happen to him? Well, Mr. Berns here smiled.

**Mr. Berns:** Well, some might say that would depend upon whether he was known to be just or unjust. That is to say, whether he were caught in his—

**LS:** I see. So, in other words, if he were very clever, he might get away with it.

**Mr. Berns:** Yeah.

**LS:** Yes. At any rate, Socrates doesn't speak here of justice among other things. Well, you all remember the case stated by Glaucon so forcefully. Yes? And now?

**Reader:** ““The man who persuades you to lend him money or goods and then keeps them is without doubt a rogue; but much the greatest rogue of all is the man who has gulled his city into the belief that he is fit to direct it.”

For my part I thought that such talks did discourage imposture among his companions.” (I.7.5)

**LS:** Ya. So Xenophon gives his own private judgment without wishing to decide for anyone else: to me he seemed to dehort from boasting his companions, <sup>5</sup>literally by conversing in such a manner. It is not *dialelogomenos*, it is not a dialogue, but it is here called a dialogue. This also needs some reflection. This chapter is rather a harangue, like chapter five. The two harangues surround this crucially important chapter six, which deals with Socrates' wisdom. Now the difficulty—that is obviously reasonable, what is said here about the absurdity of boasting. One could perhaps wonder why Socrates does not mention the most common form of boasting: that one believes to know while not knowing. Otherwise, I do not see any particular difficulty in this chapter. The difficulty consists rather in the *place* which this chapter, which this discussion occupies than in its content. We have to remind ourselves again of the general outline of this section: piety, continence. That worked out fine up to chapter five, easily. And then the next chapter, the first chapter of the Second Book, deals again with continence. Could this chapter possibly in any way have anything to do with the subject of piety? Could impiety be a kind of boasting? I believe everyone will say: Of course. But what would have prevented Xenophon from saying so? The preceding conversation on piety, chapter four, was devoted more precisely to the *daimonion*, and that means to Socrates' *daimonion*. Could Socrates' speaking of his *daimonion* be an act of boasting? Let us look at Book 4, chapter three, paragraph 12. We have only to read the end of this paragraph.

**Reader:** “Yet again, in so far as we are powerless of ourselves to foresee what is expedient for the future, the gods lend us their aid, revealing the issues by divination to inquirers, and teaching them how to obtain the best results.”

“With you, Socrates, they seem to deal even more friendly than with other men, if it is true that, even unasked, they warn you by signs what to do and what not to do.”

“Yes, and you will realize—” (IV.3.12)

**LS:** No, he doesn't say yes. He simply doesn't answer that.

**Reader:** “You will realize—”

**LS:** No, we don't need that anymore. Now there is another point to consider: boasting is an awful thing, and surely was always regarded by Socrates as a very bad habit. And yet on one occasion at least, he did something like boast, according to Xenophon himself. And this was when he talked to the jury, when he was accused. You have in your edition, I have seen, the *Apology of Socrates*, will you read the beginning of that.

**Reader (Mr. Williamson):** I don't have it in this volume, I'm afraid.

**LS:** It is in here.

**Reader (Mr. Williamson):** Oh yes, I see.

**LS:** At the end. In the older editions it is not in.

**Reader (Mr. Williamson):** Not in, this volume, no. What is the number?

**LS:** At the beginning.

**Reader:** At the beginning.

"I think it worthwhile to remember Socrates and how he planned for his defense at the end of his life, when he was summoned before the court. Others also have written about this, and all have noticed Socrates' grandiloquent manner of speaking."

**LS:** Ya, grandiloquent, that is already somewhat—a translation which takes the sting out of it. The word which Xenophon uses is *megalēgoria*, talking big, he talked big. Yes, read on.

**Reader:** "Which is clear proof that he really spoke that way. But these writers have not made clear the fact that Socrates had already come to consider death preferable to life, and thus they have made his grandiloquence seem rather senseless."

**LS:** His talking big. So the purpose of the *Apology of Socrates*, of this writing, is <sup>6</sup>to justify or vindicate Socrates' talking big, showing that it was sensible in the circumstances. And this, the *Apology of Socrates*, agrees largely with the last chapter of the *Memorabilia*, where Xenophon also presents Socrates' conduct in the last time of his life; but there <sup>7</sup>he comes to this question because some people have said that his condemnation proved that his *daimonion* was not trustworthy, because otherwise it would have warned him in advance and he could have acted correspondingly. So we have here these two positions: vindicating Socrates' *daimonion*, vindicating Socrates' talking big. Is there some connection between the two things? Socrates' talking big before the jury *has* something to do with his *daimonion*. He speaks of it and shows, more or less as Xenophon shows in the first chapter of the *Memorabilia*, that Socrates' <sup>8</sup>*daimonion* was utterly reliable. But here of course it aroused the anger of the jury, it was talking big. Now whether there is any connection more than that between Socrates' *daimonion* and boasting, that we must leave open. But the structure of the whole discussion, the place of this particular chapter, forces us to raise this question.

**Student:** If you were as good in something as you wished to seem but yet you weren't known to be as good, wouldn't it be necessary to boast then?

**LS:** For example, if someone is, say, a good flute-player?

**Student:** Yes.

**LS:** But not as good as he thinks?

**Student:** No, he is as good as he wants to appear, but he yet doesn't appear that way. Wouldn't it then be necessary for him to fashion an image for himself?

**LS:** Not in this sense, he is not a boaster but he may very well be a fool, because if he says something incredible about himself, that arouses some graver doubt regarding him. Is this not so?

**Student:** Perhaps.

**LS:** And therefore he is not strictly speaking a boaster.

**Student:** You mean boasting is always empty?

**LS:** Yes, it is always claiming something for one's self which one does not possess.

**Student:** I see.

**Different student:** But I thought that Mr. Elias was asking about the case of the man who seems to be a boaster but who is not a boaster, because he maybe was as good as he claimed to be, but he did not appear to be as good as he—

**LS:** Ya, but—understood that, but could this not be an act of folly? . . . but could it not be an act of folly?

**Student:** You mean, to make the claim?

**LS:** Ya, even if it is perfectly justified. So strictly speaking he would not be boasting, but it is not necessarily a good or wise action, it seems to me. Now this is the only chapter in Xenophon, in the Socratic writings at any rate, where boasting is discussed, and it is discussed in a place where one would expect a discussion of piety or impiety. Now is there any point you would like to raise before we turn to the next chapter, the next book? The First Book we have read now, whether the division into books stems from Xenophon or not I believe is unknown, and it is not important for us. But it *may* stem from him, all right, and then it would be remarkable that he interrupted this order—piety, continence—by the division into Books, but with other people [who] have done the same thing, this would not be too surprising.

**Student:** What, I wonder if this—you talked about, you referred to the connection between his *megalēgoria* and his *daimonion*. I mean, why would, I wonder if you could spell it out, why



would his talking about the *daimonion* be regarded as talking big? Is it because he simply is making special claims for himself?

**LS:** Ya, well, if someone claims to have a pipeline to heaven, is this not suspected of boasting?

**Student:** Yeah, especially if you thought it was not true. If you thought it was true you wouldn't regard it as boasting.

**LS:** No, no. But that's true; but apparently the people like Aristodemus, for example, who was present when Socrates made his predictions based on his *daimonion* and saw they were invariably true, nevertheless did not believe in Socrates' *daimonion*. So such a man would doubtless have regarded this not necessarily as boasting, because he knew that Socrates was not a boaster, but as something which is strange. And this would appear to be as boasting to people who did not "quote know" what he and Aristodemus "quote knew."

**Mr. Berns:** Yeah. Would it [be] more boasting, would it be more boastful, if Socrates simply claimed that he had a natural gift for seeing what was right and wrong in these matters, and so that those things that were said to be done by the *daimonion* would be then be simply by his own nature?

**LS:** Ya. But in such a case, what could he have said? What would be the alternative? And that he would have said to his companions: I gave you good advice all the time, and when I, especially when I advised you strongly against something, it proved to be fatal to the man who acted against my advice. Now so—

[break in tape]

—that would be regarded as boasting.

**Student:** Now, Mr. Berns, I think, means—Mr. Berns I think means, what if he said, "I am infallible," without any *daimonion*.

**LS:** Now, this is—I believe the answer is obvious.

**Mr. Berns:** That would be boasting. What if we take another case? Suppose he is—suppose, as seems to be the case, he is almost infallible, and suppose he were to claim, "I am *almost* infallible"?

**LS:** But that doesn't help in the present crucial case because he may just be . . .

**Mr. Klein:** Now excuse me, I think this—I think, if I'm not mistaken, Mr. Berns correct me, I might misunderstand the word to mean this: if he said: "I am infallible," not the *daimonion*, that would [be] pure boasting, but if he said: "Well, it's my *daimonion*," then it's *his* boasting.

**LS:** Ya, but on the other hand—now, if he would say, ya, sure, if he would say "infallible," but the alternative would not be that, but to say: "He has a remarkable *eustochia*, guessing quality,"

this could be granted. But then he refers to the *daimonion*, that would imply that he has some super-human support involved, and that would be boasting, whereas if he would say: “If I’m a good advisor, you know that,” then that is not boasting at all because that is borne out by experience. The experience would not bear out the *daimonion*, it would bear out the goodness of his advice.

**Mr. Berns:** Yeah, well, all that I have added, Mr. Klein did understand me, was this: that if he were to say: “I have a good nature, therefore listen to what I say,” that would, I think, be regarded as almost intolerable arrogance, even if true. But if he says: “It’s not me, it’s thanks to some god,” then—

**LS:** Ya, but that is not so simple, I mean, because of the view of what is arrogant and what is not was probably different in Greece from what is now generally regarded. I will remind you of the passage in the *Oeconomicus* where, when he talked to the groom of Nicias [about] this horse and found out that this horse is good, although he does not possess money, and it is good because it has a good nature. And Socrates draws a conclusion: Therefore I can also, without having money, become good; and that implies that he is sure that he has a good nature. I grant you, he doesn’t say that he has such a good nature, but he clearly implies it. So that would then become a matter of, how should I say, of tact, delicacy or however you call it, whether one should spell out such claims or not, but in fact they are raised. And Socrates raises quite—in the *Apology*, he raises quite a few claims referring indeed to the Delphic Apollo, who had said: No one is more liberal, more just, more moderate than Socrates. And in another way, of course, the same thing is also true in Plato’s *Apology*, although there it’s more mildly stated. Humility was not regarded as a virtue. You know the description of the magnanimous man: he demands great honors for himself while being worth . . . . So that, in our usage, would be the opposite of *humble*, ya? I believe in England it is up to the present day, if someone is elected Speaker in the House of Commons, he must show signs of reluctance. I do not know whether this still true in Labour Britain, but it was true in former times, because he regards himself as unworthy. The Greeks did not have this kind of thing.

**Mr. Berns:** Yeah, well, but I still think there’s something of what I mean, even in the *Meno*, I think, when near the end of the *Meno*, when the argument is really about different natural capacities, one can only get certain people to accept the consequences of different natural capacities by resorting to divinity, *theomoiria*.

**LS:** But does Socrates say that he has virtue by *theomoiria*?

**Mr. Berns:** He does not say it [laughing], but it certainly is implied.

**LS:** It makes a great difference. It makes a great difference, and Meno apparently did not think of that question. At any rate, that is, it is quite useful I think that we read that chapter. So now shall we turn? Oh, yes.

**Student:** Why does the First Book end where it does? Is there any logical argument that is completed at the end of chapter seven in this Book?

**Mr. Williamson:** [repeating question to LS] Why does the First Book end where it does? Is there any—?

**LS:** Ya. One cannot—I mean, assuming that the division of the *Memorabilia* into four Books was made by some antiquarian in Alexandria, then he was as intelligent or as dumb as antiquarians are at all times, and that would not be an interesting question. But if it was made by Xenophon, then it would be of some interest to find out the reason. Perhaps he wanted to have the division into Books, which would be at variance with the deeper division of the subject matter.

**Student:** The second part of the question, the second part of the question was: Is there any logical argument that culminates [at] the end of chapter seven?

**LS:** Ya. Well, even an illogical argument would be very helpful. [Laughter] But no, there is none other, except the broad context from the basis of which one could, one would say one expects here a statement on piety, and instead you get the statement on boasting. That's all one can say, and one must make the best of it. So, now shall we turn to chapter one of the second?

**Reader:** “In other conversations I thought that he exhorted his companions to practice self-control in the matter of eating and drinking, and sexual indulgence, and sleeping, and endurance of cold and heat and toil.” (II.1.1)

**LS:** Yes, so that deals, as you see, again with continence, and it again deals with Socrates as *exhorting* to that. We have discussed this before. Socrates could not make men continent because that depends on one's listening to the exhortation, and therefore the maximum he could do here was to exhort. Yes. We have here seven items<sup>9</sup> regarding which men can be continent or the opposite, and there were formerly, there were in the second chapter of the First Book, in paragraph one, when we mainly dealt with Socrates' continence. Perhaps you'll read it, Mr. Williamson?

**Reader:** “No less wonderful is it to me that some believed the charge brought against Socrates of corrupting the youth. In the first place, apart from what I have said, in control of his own passions and appetites he was the strictest of men; further, in endurance—”

**LS:** Ya, that means, here, in regarding sex and the belly, ya? And?

**Reader:** “further, in endurance of cold and heat and every kind of toil he was most resolute; and besides, his needs were so schooled to moderation that having very little he was yet very content.” (I.2.1)

**LS:** Ya. This is another enumeration, and then we find one at the beginning of chapter five.

**Reader:** “But if self-control too is a fair and noble possession, let us now consider whether he led men up to that virtue by discourse like the following:

“Men, if we were at war and wanted to choose a leader most capable of helping us to save ourselves and conquer the enemy, should we choose one whom we knew to be the slave of the belly, or of wine, or lust, or sleep? How could we expect—” (I.5.1)

**LS:** And so on. So that we will see, in the main the enumerations agree but there are always many differences, we must see. Here, in the one, in the enumerations we read now, sleep is in the center. Let us read the sequel. In the beginning of the second—

**Reader:** “Aware that one of his companions was rather intemperate in such matters, he said: ‘Tell me, Aristippus, if you were required to take charge of two youths and educate them so that the one would be fit to rule and the other would never think of putting himself forward, how would you educate them? Shall we consider it, beginning with the elementary question of food?’ ‘‘Oh yes—’’” (II.1.1)

**LS:** One moment, please. So this is Aristippus; he is well known independently of Xenophon because he is a founder of the so-called Cyrenaic School, a hedonistic school but not quite the same as the Epicurean School. And here he’s presented, of course, not with the view to his philosophic teaching—that would be improper in Xenophon—but with a view to his life. He was a hedonist, no, he was a practical hedonist, and therefore Socrates raises this question. But it is remarkable he does not raise the question here regarding the wisdom or unwisdom of incontinence as such, but regarding the wisdom or unwisdom of continence regarding the ability to *rule*, and that, why should this be so important to Aristippus? The question will become clearer while we go on. Why should the point of view of the ruling be so important in a conversation with that particular man? Yes.

**Reader:**

“Oh yes,” replied Aristippus, “food does seem to come first; for one can’t live without food.”

“Well, now, will not a desire for food naturally arise in both at certain times?”

“Yes, naturally.”

“And which of the two should we train in the habit of transacting urgent business before he satisfies his hunger?”

“The one who is being trained to rule, undoubtedly; else State business might be neglected during his tenure.”

“And must not the same one be given power to resist thirst when both want to drink?”

“Certainly.”

“And to which shall we give the power of limiting his sleep so that he can go to bed late and get up early, and do without sleep if need be?” (II.1.1-3)

**LS:** You will see that Xenophon changes now the order of the seven items mentioned. In the list given at the beginning, lust was the third. Now he brings in sleep instead of it. We must see whether that makes any sense.

**Reader:**

“And the power to control his passions, so that he may not be hindered in doing necessary work?”

“To the same again.”

“And to which shall we give the habit of not shirking a task, but undertaking it willingly?”

**LS:** Ya, task is too general—toil, toil. I mean, task is not necessarily unpleasant but toil is. Yeah?

**Reader:**

“That too will go to the one who is being trained to rule.”

“And to which would the knowledge needful for overcoming enemies be more appropriately given?”

“Without doubt to the one who is being trained to rule; for the other lessons would be useless without such knowledge.”

“Do<sup>i</sup> you think that with this education—” (II.1.3-4)

**LS:** It is here the transition from toil to *learning*; learning doesn’t come out clearly in the translation, I believe. But it should be toil and learning. Yes?

**Reader:**

“Don’t you think that with this education he will be less likely to be caught by his enemy than any, than other creatures? Some of them, you know, are so greedy, that in spite of extreme timidity in some cases, they are drawn irresistibly to the bait to get food, and are caught; and others are snared by drink.”

“Yes, certainly.”

“Others again — quails and partridges, for instance — are so amorous, that when they hear the cry of the female, they are carried away by desire and anticipation, throw caution to the winds and blunder into the nets. Is it not so?”

He agreed again.

“Now, don’t you think it disgraceful that a man should be in the same plight as the silliest of wild creatures? Thus an adulterer enters the women’s quarters, knowing that by committing adultery he is in danger of incurring the penalties threatened by the law, and that he may be trapped, caught and ill-treated. When such misery and disgrace hang over the adulterer’s head, and there are many remedies to relieve him of his carnal desire without risk, is it not sheer lunacy to plunge headlong into danger?”

“Yes, I think it is.” (II.1.4-5)

**LS:** You see now this is strange; he had spoken before of lust, and had taken up other subjects, and now he returns to it. Now <sup>10</sup>if you look more closely, you see that he does not speak here at all of ruling or men fit to rule, but he speaks only of the unreasonableness of adultery, and regarding that Socrates and Aristippus both agree. Now, what is the relation of fitness to rule and adultery, in particular? Well, let us consider first a man of whom Xenophon could not know anything: King David was surely fit to rule. And you know the story with Bathsheba. In Xenophon’s age and country, there was Alcibiades and the story of his Spartan queen, which came out because of some earthquake in Sparta at that time; but again you can say, still can say, Xenophon does not mention that in his Greek History. Maybe he didn’t know it. But there is one

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<sup>i</sup> In translation: “don’t”

case which he does mention, and that is that of the Younger Cyrus. The Younger Cyrus is presented by him as a man fit to rule, more fit to rule than anyone in Persia after the first Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire. And yet in the same context he mentions an adulterous relation between Cyrus and the Queen of Cilicia, who, as is perfectly clear at the time, was married at that time, and her husband was alive, <sup>11</sup>so it was a case of adultery. So this is not altogether negligible. Let me state it this way: a man may be fit to rule and yet have, suffer from, this particular incontinence. On the other hand, people who are *very* continent in this respect may be very unfit to rule. Is this not the case? And must we not keep this in mind in understanding this whole discussion? I think reflections of this kind are forced upon us by this strange and detailed, unnecessary repetition of this particular subject. Now, how does he go on from here?

**Reader:**

“And considering that the great majority of essential occupations—<sup>ii</sup>warfare, agriculture and very many others, are carried on in the open air, don't you think it gross negligence that so many men are untrained to withstand cold and heat?”

He agreed again.

“Don't you think then, that one who is going to rule must adapt himself to bear them lightly?”

“Certainly.” (II.1.6)

**LS:** So now he has covered all the items enumerated at the beginning. Now, in this, in the discussion as distinguished from the initial enumeration, we have this order: food, drink, sleep, sex, toil, learning, adultery, heat, and cold. So externally, toil is here in the center, but in fact, lust. So <sup>12</sup>the simple mechanical rule—what is in the center is most important in the context—is not always true, it needs some qualifications, one still has to use common sense. So this is now established, at least to Aristippus' satisfaction: that a man who is fit to rule must be continent in all these respects, and a man who does not even *claim* to rule, he may very well be incontinent. Yes?

**Reader:**

“If then we classify those who control themselves in all these matters as ‘fit to rule,’ shall we not classify those who cannot behave so as men with no claim to be rulers?”

He agreed again.

“Well now, as you know the category to which each of these species belongs, have you ever considered in which category you ought to put yourself?”

“I have; and I do not for a moment put myself in the category of those who want to be rulers. For considering how hard a matter it is to provide for one's own needs, I think it absurd not to be content to do that, but to shoulder the burden of supplying the wants of the community as well. That anyone should sacrifice a large part of his own wishes and make himself accountable as head of the state for the least failure to carry out all the wishes of the community is surely the height of folly. For states claim to treat their rulers just as I claim to treat my servants. I expect my men to provide me with necessities in abundance, but not to touch any of them; and states hold it to be the business of the ruler to supply them with all manner of good things, and to abstain from all of them himself.

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<sup>ii</sup> There is a break in the tape here; the remainder of the passage is taken from the translation.

And so, should anyone want to bring plenty of trouble on himself and others, I would educate him as you propose and number him with 'those fitted to be rulers': but myself I classify with those who wish for a life of the greatest ease and pleasure that can be had." (II.1.7-9)

**LS:** So that it is clear. Aristippus regards pleasure and an easy life as the best and therefore rejects the life of the ruler, the rulers, for the reason given here. Ruling is most unpleasant. Rulers are treated by the cities like slaves. That settles it for Aristippus. Now, what can Socrates say against that?

**Reader:**

Here Socrates asked:

"Shall we then consider whether the rulers or the ruled live the pleasanter life?"

"Certainly," replied Aristippus.

"To take first the nations known to us. In Asia the rulers are the Persians; the Syrians, Lydians and Phrygians are the ruled. In Egypt, Europe, sorry yes, the Scythians rule, and the Maeotians are ruled. In Africa the Carthaginians rule and the Libyans are ruled. Which of the two classes, think you, enjoys the pleasanter life? Or take the Greeks, of whom you yourself are one; do you think that the controlling or the controlled communities enjoy the pleasanter life?" (II.1.9-10)

**LS:** You see, Socrates turns here now from the individual men to the groups, to the cities or nations or tribes, whatever you have, which rule and those which are ruled. And therefore, since Aristippus has admitted ruling is unpleasant and he now is compelled to admit that being ruled is also [un]pleasant (although there are differences between individuals and groups), what can he do?

**Reader:** "Nay," replied Aristippus, "for my part I am no candidate for slavery; but there is, as I hold, a middle path in which I am fain to walk. That way leads neither through rule nor slavery, but through liberty, which is the royal road to happiness." (II.1.11)

**LS:** Yes. Obviously Aristippus cannot deny what Socrates had suggested, and therefore he must find a *third* way, a middle way, *via del mezzo*, and that is what he seeks, which is neither ruling nor ruled. Yes?

**Reader:** "'Ah,' said Socrates, 'if only that path can avoid the world as well as rule and slavery, there may be something in what you say. But, since you are in the world—'"

**LS:** Among human beings, ya.

**Reader:** "'if you intend neither to rule nor to be ruled, and do not choose to truckle to the rulers — I think you must see that the stronger have a way of making the weaker rue their lot both in public and in private life, and treating them like slaves.'" (II.1.12-13)

**LS:** Ya. So<sup>13</sup> we see here a slight irregularity or unevenness: if you do not decide to rule, nor to be ruled, [and]<sup>14</sup> do not serve the rulers willingly, then you have to serve the rulers unwillingly,

ya? That is the point here. But it is of course possible also to obey the rulers without [being] simply forced and without waiting for punishment. What Socrates says here is this, then, if we state it in our way: What you propose is impossible; if you do not wish to play the hammer, you must play the anvil. There's no way out. In this respect, human life is simply political, and Aristippus' suggestion of a non-political way is impossible. And this is, I believe, one part of that Socratic teaching regarding the political things to which Xenophon had alluded in chapter two of the First Book. Yes?

**Reader:** “You cannot be unaware that where some have sown and planted, others cut their corn and fell their trees, and in all manner of ways harass the weaker if they refuse to bow down, until they are persuaded to accept slavery as an escape from war with the stronger. So, too, in private life do not brave and mighty men enslave and plunder the cowardly and feeble folk?”  
 “Yes, but my plan for avoiding—” (II.1.13)

**LS:** Yes, now wait one second. So here Socrates makes it quite clear that it applies equally to cities or communities in general and to individuals. The question is: Why did he make in paragraph 10—[why] did he speak then only of communities ruling? Well, at any rate, Aristippus is satisfied and draws a conclusion in what follows immediately.

**Reader:**

“Yes, but my plan for avoiding such treatment is this. I do not shut myself up in the four corners of a community, but am a stranger in every land.”

“A very cunning trick, that!” cried Socrates, “for ever since the death of Sinis and Sceiron and Procrustes no one injures strangers! And yet nowadays those who take a hand in the affairs of their homeland pass laws to protect themselves from injury, get friends to help them over and above those whom nature has given them, encompass their cities with fortresses, get themselves weapons to ward off the workers of mischief; and besides all this seek to make allies in other lands; and in spite of all these precautions, they are still wronged.” (II.113-14)

**LS:** Yes. Now, one second, there is only one minor point, but here what the people—it is Aristippus [who] does not want to shut himself up in a *politeia*,<sup>15</sup> in political life, and Socrates calls this an enormous trick, a very clever gimmick. He gives this reason: the life of the strangers are—even citizens cannot secure themselves against suffering injustice. How little can *strangers*, who do not have these enormous helps which citizens have, do that? And he mentions here men who tried to acquire friends in addition to the so-called necessary ones. Now this *anankaioi*, that is a word like the Latin *necessarii* for relatives. And Xenophon, or Socrates, mentions this in passing; and this is a strange word for relatives, but he doesn't draw any conclusion from that here. The friends do not have this necessary character which relatives at least *may* have, as some of you may know. Yes?

**Reader:** “But you, with none of these advantages, spend much time on the open road, where so many come to harm; and into whatever city you enter, you rank below all its citizens, and are one of those specially marked down for attack by intending wrongdoers; and yet, because you are a stranger, do you expect to escape injury? What gives you confidence? Is it that the cities by proclamation guarantee your safety in your coming and going? Or is it the thought that no master



would find you worth having among his slaves? For who would care to have a man in his house who wants to do no work and has a weakness for high living?” (II.1.15)

**LS:** Yes. Now you see there is of course not the slightest suggestion on the part of Socrates that Aristippus might inflict injury or be unjust to other people. It is only the question of the things which Aristippus might suffer from others and to which he is much more exposed than people who do not live as strangers everywhere. Yes.

**Reader:** ““But now let us see how masters treat such servants. Do they not starve them to keep them from immorality, lock up the stores to stop their stealing, clap fetters on them so that they can't run away, and beat the laziness out of them with whips? What do you do yourself to cure such faults among your servants?”

““I make their lives a burden to them until I reduce them to submission.”” (II.1.16-17)

**LS:** Yes. Now we see here, if we haven't seen it before, that Aristippus has, of course, servants or slaves, and that's to say he makes use of a political institution and doesn't see the inconsistency thereof. And <sup>16</sup>there was another reference to this when Socrates spoke of his being a Greek, which is also a political notion although there was not a Greek state, but there were particular political relations among Greeks. And Aristippus <sup>17</sup>was not a member of the New Left or anything of this kind. He has slaves and he enjoys having them, and if they don't obey he punishes them into obedience. Yes?

**Reader:** ““But how about those who are trained in the art of kingship, Socrates, which you appear to identify with happiness? How are they better off than those whose sufferings are compulsory, if they must bear hunger, thirst, cold, sleeplessness, and endure all these tortures willingly? For if the same back gets the flogging whether its owner kicks or consents, or, in short, if the same body, consenting or objecting, is besieged by all these torments, I see no difference, apart from the folly of voluntary suffering.”” (II.1.17)

**LS:** Yes, here Aristippus ascribes to Socrates a view with some hesitations. He says: “You seem to believe” the view that the royal or kingly art is happiness. Socrates himself *never* says that. There is another passage later on, in Book 4, chapter two, where the interlocutor there, Euthydemus . . . no, there Socrates says—I think we should have a look at it. Book 4, chapter two, paragraph 11.

**Reader:**

Then Socrates exclaimed:

“Surely, Euthydemus, you don't covet the kind of excellence that makes good statesmen and managers, competent rulers and benefactors of themselves and mankind in general?”

“Yes, I do, Socrates,” answered Euthydemus, “that kind of excellence I greatly desire.”

“Why,” cried Socrates, “it is the noblest kind of excellence, the greatest of arts that you covet, for it belongs to kings and is dubbed ‘kingly.’” (IV.2.11)

**LS:** Ya. So here Socrates says that, but of course Socrates does not say that *he* longs for it. This we must keep in mind because we have seen in the First Book, in chapter two, that there was a certain ambiguity <sup>18</sup>as to Socrates' posture toward political life and political office. So this is

from Aristippus' point of view: Socrates looks as if he were to regard the kingly art, and I suppose he means by that the exercise of the kingly art, as happiness. Yes?

**Reader:** "How are they better off than those whose sufferings—" Oh, I have read that part already.

**LS:** Ya. Well, Aristippus had said that to undergo toil willingly is no better than to undergo toils unwillingly, and that Socrates must face now.

**Reader:**

"What, Aristippus," exclaimed Socrates, "don't you think that there is just this difference between these voluntary and involuntary sufferings, that if you bear hunger or thirst willingly, you can eat, drink, or what not, when you choose, whereas compulsory suffering is not to be ended at all? Besides, he who endures willingly enjoys his work because he is comforted by hope; hunters, for instance, toil gladly in hope of game. Rewards like these are indeed of little worth after all the toil; but what of those who toil to win good friends, or to subdue enemies, or to make themselves capable in body and soul of managing their own homes well, of helping their friends and serving their country? Surely these toil gladly for such prizes and leave a joyous, lead a, live a joyous life, well content with themselves, praised and envied by everyone else?" (II.1.18-19)

**LS:** Ya. So that is Socrates' simple argument, that all these unpleasantnesses are gladly borne with the view to the reward one expects, so there is no—that may be perfectly compatible with the pleasant life. And then he enumerates a number of these rewards; <sup>19</sup>the subjects are not new, we have seen them before although perhaps not in exactly the same form. I mention here only one thing which he I think did not translate correctly towards the end: admiring themselves, being praised and envied by the others, self-admiration, *sibi placere* in Latin.

**Student:** Isn't that vanity?

**LS:** Pardon?

**Student:** Isn't that vanity?

**LS:** Not quite. I mean, <sup>20</sup>from a biblical perspective it is bad, *sibi ipse placere*: one should please God, not oneself. But that was not the Socratic view. In the *Apology of Socrates*, which deals with Socrates' talking big, Socrates says, even about himself: I admire myself mightily, *ischurōs*.<sup>iii</sup> This is a provocative statement, but for Socrates this would appear, and will appear later on from the last chapter of the *Memorabilia*, [that] his view is this: the most important point is to become good in his sense of the word good. And then this progress, progress in wisdom, is necessarily accompanied, as all progress, by a feeling of pleasure; and that feeling, and that has to do—pleasure and the progress of one's self.

**Student:** Now the Greek . . . were not as, as prominently or vain as it would—

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<sup>iii</sup> Xenophon, *Apology of Socrates* 5.

**LS:** Yes, surely not. Ya, but still, when you would look it from, in a biblical perspective, then these differences become insignificant. And you see also what he says here in paragraph 19 at the beginning, when he speaks of . . . “those who toil in order to acquire *good* friends.” Acquiring friends is not such a great reward. We have spoken of this difference between friends and good friends before. Yes. And now?

**Reader:** “Moreover, indolence and present enjoyment can never bring the body into good condition, as trainers say, neither do they put into the soul knowledge of any value, but strenuous effort leads up to good and noble deeds, as good men say. And so—” (II.1.20)

**LS:** Now, one moment. You’ll see, one must—that is strange. He gives first, when he speaks of the well-being of the body brought about by toil he refers to an authority: the gymnastic trainers, and then when he speaks of the care for noble and good deeds, he refers again to an authority, the good men. But when he speaks of the knowledge worth mentioning, knowledge worth mentioning put into the soul on the basis of continence, he does not refer to any authority, but one could say that this would be the philosophers in particular. No mention of them. He speaks now in the sequel only of what the good men say, not of what the gymnastic trainers or that omitted group, the philosophers, say. Yes?

**Reader:**

<sup>iv</sup>And so says Hesiod somewhere:

““Wickedness can be had in abundance easily: smooth is the road and very nigh she dwells. But in front of virtue the gods immortal have put sweat: long and steep is the path to her and rough at first; but when you reach the top, then at length the road is easy, hard though it was.””<sup>v</sup> [tape returns]

“And we have the testimony of Epicharmus too in the line:

““The gods demand of us toil as the price of all good things.””

“And elsewhere he says:

““Knave, yearn not for the soft things, lest thou earn the hard.””

“Aye, and Prodicus the wise expresses himself to the like effect concerning Virtue in the essay ‘On Heracles’ that he recites to throngs of listeners. This, so far as I remember, is how he puts it.” (II.1.20-21)

**LS:** Ya. Now let us stop here. So there are three good men whom Socrates adduces as authorities for his exhortation: Hesiod, Epicharmus, and Prodicus. Now, it cannot be clear now <sup>21</sup>from what we have read, but you will see soon that in this respect there is no difference between Prodicus on the one hand, and Hesiod and Epicharmus on the other. These three authorities all refer, back up, their teaching by the gods, which Socrates had not done. The theological support, that comes only here. And the story which follows is a famous story of Heracles at the crossroads, confronted by Virtue and Vice with capital V’s, and hopefully choosing Virtue. Whether he did it, that is not said here. Now in this respect it is perhaps not altogether irrelevant that Epicharmus, a great comic poet from Sicily, wrote comedies dealing with Heracles’ voracity, which is not exactly a triumph of continence. But ya, then Prodicus. Prodicus was one of the men

<sup>iv</sup> There is a gap in the tape at this point. What follows is not on the tape but was presumably read.

<sup>v</sup> Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 285.

called sophists, and he comes together with Socrates in Plato's *Protagoras*. And there he is, he was obviously the man, the sophist <sup>22</sup>to whom Socrates was closest, more than to Protagoras and to Hippias. But he was not outstanding as a representative of endurance, and that is described in Plato's *Protagoras*, how soft Prodicus lived, and that is of course also very funny that he should be a preacher of the austere life. But we must go into why he has, why the essay, as he calls it, of Prodicus on Heracles is—it has not been preserved, and so we have no possibility of knowing what Socrates or Xenophon changed there—that there is change is explicitly stated. Socrates says here, he speaks from memory, and later on at the end Socrates says: I have stated it in less grand language than Prodicus stated it. We cannot make this probably very entertaining comparison. We have to read it as it is. This story of Prodicus takes up almost half of the whole chapter. It is a unique case that another *teacher, sophistēs* in the wide sense of the term, is given so much space in Xenophon. That is one sign—I believe there are more—that Socrates was closer to Prodicus. Occasionally he mentions <sup>23</sup>taking one course with Prodicus, in the *Protagoras* I believe. So shall we now, we can at least begin? Read the first sentence.

**Reader:** “When Heracles was passing from boyhood to youth's estate, wherein the young, now becoming their own masters, show whether they will approach life by the path of virtue or the path of vice, he went out into a quiet place, and sat pondering which road to take. And there appeared two women of great stature making towards him.” (II.1.21-22)

**LS:** Ya. If I may make this point. Prodicus does not refer to any authority, I mean authority or tradition, just as little as Protagoras does when he tells his myth in Plato's *Protagoras*. As a rule, <sup>24</sup>such accounts are based on what is said, on traditions. But this kind of people, they invent and do not refer to traditions.

**Student:** Could you say something about the relationship between the *Protestant Ethic* and the quotation of Hesiod and Epicharmus?

**LS:** Ya. What do you mean by Protestant ethic?

**Student:** Yeah, as I have understood it in—I've read about it in a class—it means, well, you work hard and you will enjoy many benefits.

**LS:** Ya. This is—I think that all goes back to the vulgarization of Max Weber, a famous social scientist in Germany, and there is—Weber, I will only mention one thing. There is a certain kind of men who are mentioned in Weber (and also elsewhere), and they are called the Puritans. You surely have read, heard that term.

**Student:** The purity?

**LS:** Puritans. Because the Protestant—that may mean also Lutheran, and the Lutherans had nothing to do with this development of which Weber speaks, but it is more the Calvinists, and in particular the Puritans. Now who is Weber's first authority when he begins to present the problem, the super Puritan? Benjamin Franklin. And because Franklin had said in his autobiography that he <sup>25</sup>who wastes a dollar, or whatever the monetary unit was at the time, murders *thousands* of dollars which he could have gained by investing the dollar profitably. And

Weber says: Here you see <sup>26</sup>the whole thunder from Sinai coming down on the fellow who wastes a dollar. I believe that we have to do without the Protestant ethic—I mean, not on this ground alone, but we have to try to. It is a wholly vague thing. <sup>27</sup>One cannot go into [that] now, however; I have also forgotten many things, but Franklin <sup>28</sup>I still remember.

**Student:** I think it's nice to add that in this course, anyway, that one thing that Weber and most of the people who follow him, when talking about Franklin, don't seem to note at all, is that Franklin was a very clever man in covering up what he thought and what he felt when he thought that publicity might not be the best thing, *and* he said that he learned a great deal about how to present himself publically from Xenophon. Especially Xenophon.

**LS:** Ya, I remember that now. He translates even something from the *Memorabilia*.

**Student:** He was a student. He said that he learned his style of writing, presenting himself, from Xenophon.

**LS:** I forgot that. But he gives other good advice, which is in the . . . quite superficially, he had a very great sense of humor. And Max Weber, who was wholly impervious to that sense of humor [laughter]. Otherwise he would not have begun the study that way. And when he comes to the sources which are more important, really, the seventeenth-century Puritans, then the whole thing was stated neatly by Tawney—an English economic historian, Richard Henry Tawney<sup>vi</sup>—that he said the Puritans of whom Weber speaks are Puritans who had already made their peace with the *world*. That's to say they were no longer the real Puritans, those who were Predestinarians, and who were not concerned with enriching themselves. This is a fantastic construction that <sup>29</sup>Weber makes. People say [that] either you are condemned and the majority are condemned, or you are elect. What can you do in order to find out? Weber says: Well, go into business [laughter], and if you are successful then you are elect. That's sheer nonsense. One only has to read Bunyan. What he does when he is concerned about his election, he opens the Bible and sees which passage he sees first. That would be of some help, but surely he doesn't think for one moment of economic success. Ya, and today, of course, it is under attack by the people who *believe* all these things which they have been told by the professors of sociology regarding Protestant ethics, so they fight against a non-existent enemy, except you use it in a very, extremely loose sense, but then Protestant ethics doesn't make sense. That is like what Plato says in the *Republic*: the democrats who all have complete emancipation of all passions oppose the stingy fathers, who controlled all their passions except that for money, and therefore they must . . . . It, I think there is—it doesn't make sense. And if one speaks of chastity in particular, that doesn't play any role in Weber's argument.

**Student:** If it wouldn't be too much for you to tell me what the Protestant ethic is as it is taught by sociologists?

**LS:** No, I couldn't! Then one would one have to understand why this is not so. It is not impossible. For example, I would read the *Institutions of the Christian Religion* by Calvin and his interpretation of the Ten Commandments. That would give you an idea, that I would . . . . But

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<sup>vi</sup> Strauss is probably referring to Tawney's *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (1926).

then you will not find anything of this kind. <sup>30</sup>I do not know, that was one of the most—that is different, I think, in the social sciences from the situation in the natural sciences, [that] there can be such a *breakthrough* like that of Weber, and <sup>31</sup>the ingredient of truth which it may have is in no proportion whatever to what Weber himself thought and, to say more, to what the vulgarizers of Max Weber thought.

**Student [probably Mr. Klein]:** But still the English wood is very good.

**LS:** Pardon?

**Student:** The English material is good.

**LS:** Ya, sure, solidity. Yes. But how to—do you mean solidity instead of appearance? Of—

**Student:** Yeah, this is a, a product . . . of Weber in the *Protestant Ethic*—

**LS:** Ya, but this is also in good old Socrates, when he says the beautiful—no, useful, and only the useful should become beautiful. There is, I mean, whatever the change, some change has taken place, there's no doubt about that. One sees it more clearly, I believe, in the theoreticians than in the practical men. I mean, if one reads such people like Locke, to say nothing of Hobbes, and then this beautiful expression, which is very revealing: comfortable self-preservation. Comfortable self-preservation. Self-preservation was Hobbes' formula, and Locke accepts that, but why should one have only self-preservation and not comfortable self-preservation?

**Student (Mr. Klein):** This is your concept?

**LS:** No, no, that is Locke's formula. I do not remember anymore where he uses it, but I know he uses it. This is a strange thing. Max Weber does not consider the *philosophers* of economy at all. You know, I mean, the people starting from Hobbes up to Adam Smith. This would be only rationalizations and, well, who cares for that? And the real stuff is what happened in the souls. And then it is this, people haunted by the fear of being condemned to eternal death hit on economic success as a way out. Ya. I think we will read Prodicus' essay next time, hm?

[end of tape]

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<sup>1</sup> Deleted "this"

<sup>2</sup> Deleted "he's, he's"

<sup>3</sup> Deleted "he"

<sup>4</sup> Deleted "is not only"

<sup>5</sup> Deleted "by"

<sup>6</sup> Deleted "to show that"

<sup>7</sup> Deleted "he deals"

<sup>8</sup> Deleted "that his"

<sup>9</sup> Deleted "of"

<sup>10</sup> Deleted "when"

<sup>11</sup> Deleted "living"

<sup>12</sup> Deleted "there is no"

<sup>13</sup> Deleted "here this is a"

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- <sup>14</sup> Deleted “nor”  
<sup>15</sup> Deleted “in a political”  
<sup>16</sup> Deleted “just”  
<sup>17</sup> Deleted “is not”  
<sup>18</sup> Deleted “as to whether”  
<sup>19</sup> Deleted “these”  
<sup>20</sup> Deleted “in a”  
<sup>21</sup> Deleted “ here”  
<sup>22</sup> Deleted “who was”  
<sup>23</sup> Deleted “here”  
<sup>24</sup> Deleted “such things”  
<sup>25</sup> Deleted “who does not”  
<sup>26</sup> Deleted “this”  
<sup>27</sup> Deleted “I don’t”  
<sup>28</sup> Deleted “I have”  
<sup>29</sup> Deleted “which”  
<sup>30</sup> Deleted “This is”  
<sup>31</sup> Deleted “the whole thing is of”

## Session 12: no date

**Leo Strauss:** [in progress] —or fiction called the *Protestant Ethic*. Now what reminded Mr. Meyers of Protestant ethics was Xenophon's concern with continence, I take it, and at the same time his concern with the art of money-making, *chrēmatics*. But this combination of continence and money-making has not necessarily anything to do with the *Protestant Ethic*. One only has to remember the Eighth Book of the *Republic*, where the combination of continence and money-making is presented as characteristic of the typical oligarch. People who are very continent regarding all desires except the desire for making money. Yet Xenophon is more friendly to the art of money-making, as we have seen in the *Oeconomicus*, than Plato or Aristotle. And it is not wholly groundless, although it is groundless, when Marx spoke of Xenophon's bourgeois instincts. This would have to be translated into more adequate language, but it points to something which *is*.

Now to come back for a moment to the question of Protestant ethics as the spirit of capitalism. This notion goes back to Max Weber. Now his reasoning can be stated as follows: the unlimited accumulation of capital and the unlimited profitable investment of capital, understood as an end in itself: this is the spirit of capitalism. Then where does it stem from? Nothing of this sort is found in earlier literature. But everywhere we find what Weber calls, somewhat contemptuously, a utilitarian justification of accumulation of capital and its profitable investment. So an end in itself, that is a sheer postulate of Weber, to be able to trace it to a somewhat inverted or perverted religious motivation. One can state the issue as follows. It was always agreed that whatever is conducive to the common good is good, but this is the major of the syllogism which remained unchanged. But now it is asserted [that] the accumulation of capital and so on *is* conducive to the common good, and this minor of the syllogism, this is <sup>1</sup>the thing with which we are concerned. How does this minor come about? Weber made the following distinction: it could be, however, of ancient or medieval origin or it could stem from the Renaissance, but it doesn't stem from either; and especially as far as the Renaissance is concerned, the Renaissance was an attempt to *restore* the spirit of classical antiquity, and classical antiquity does not have this. Hence, since it stems neither from classical antiquity nor from the [Renaissance]<sup>2</sup>, it must stem from the Reformation or from some branch of the Reformation. This is not a complete disjunction, because Renaissance comprises a variety of things. There are men, doubtless many men, who were concerned with restoring the spirit of antiquity especially as regards management of the household.

But there was also another kind of thing at that time, which one cannot properly subsume under Renaissance, something new. And the greatest example is Machiavelli. I'll read to you a passage from the third chapter of the *Prince*: "it is truly a very natural and ordinary thing to desire to *acquire*, and always when men are able to acquire and then do acquire, they will be praised and not blamed; but when they are unable to do it and wish to do it nevertheless, there is the error and the blame."<sup>i</sup> So in other words, what goes through all human beings is a desire to acquire, and this can be done well or ill, and that is the difference between virtue and vice. Machiavelli thinks of course in the first place of the acquisition practiced by kings and states, but he uses this general term without qualification: acquisition as acquisition. And one would have to study

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<sup>i</sup> Presumably Strauss's translation.



Machiavelli and other writers more closely and see whether there is not a direct connection between this vindication of the spirit of acquisition and the so-called spirit of capitalism.

Now last time we have begun to read, or read, most of the chapter. Chapter one of the Second Book concerns continence, and with special regard to *ruling* and being ruled. And Socrates makes there the assertion, which I stated as follows: man cannot escape *polis*, political life. Man's life is radically political. If he is not a hammer, he must be an anvil. But this assertion regarding the radically political character of human life is strikingly different from the reasoning presented by Aristotle at the beginning of his *Politics*, where man is presented as by nature political because he is an animal that possesses speech or reason and therefore cannot reach his fulfillment except in and through the *polis*. What Socrates suggests in that chapter reminds rather of *Hobbes*. Well, Hobbes also asserts the radically political character of human life, and the reason which he gives is that everyone can be killed by everyone else. Everyone is exposed to everyone else, and therefore everything else follows from that. But what Xenophon says is somehow in-between what Aristotle says and what Hobbes says. What about Plato? I think I mention only one fact: in the *Republic* especially but also in the other dialogues, there is no *eidos*, no idea, of the *polis*. If he had thought about the *polis* as Aristotle did, there would be an *eidos*.

Now from Xenophon, as I have said before, there leads a straight way to Machiavelli, straight because Machiavelli *knew* Xenophon's writings, at least two of them. Now, but if there is such a complicated relation of difference between Xenophon, Plato, and Aristotle, with what right can one speak of classical political philosophy? That does indeed not appear immediately from Plato and Aristotle, but only in retrospect, in the eighteenth century. After the heroic period of modern thought was over, people became aware of the profound difference between the ancients and the moderns, and then such people as Montesquieu and Rousseau said [that] the ancients always spoke of virtue, the moderns always speak of trade. There was some profound change which has taken place. Now, if we try to understand this profound change, we would be again driven back to Machiavelli, to the two crucial points which he opposes to earlier thought: first, that he will take his bearings <sup>3</sup>not by how men *ought to* live, not by virtue, but by how men *do* live, and that means, for example, by acquisition; and therefore the crucial point is to find the right kind of acquisition and the institution supporting that right kind.

As for this difference between the ancients and moderns, I would like to add one point with a view to Aristippus, with whom Socrates converses in this chapter. Aristippus, of whom we know almost nothing, was a so-called hedonist. In other words, he asserted that the good and the pleasant is the same thing. Afterwards, long after Socrates, and after Plato and Aristotle, another kind of hedonism appeared. It is very different from that of Aristippus, but nevertheless hedonism: that of Epicurus, which had an enormous career in Western thought, <sup>4</sup>especially in the seventeenth century, but there is one crucial difference as far as morals and politics are concerned between Epicurus and his followers in the seventeenth century. Hobbes and Locke also identify the good with the pleasant, but their hedonism was or became *political*. What is characteristic of Epicurus and the Epicurean tradition is its radically *non-political* character. In this respect there is an agreement between Epicurus and Aristippus, of whom we have been reading.

Now to come back more closely to <sup>5</sup>to the subject of this chapter: the themes again are obviously continence, but continence for what? Continence is a foundation of virtue, but it can also be the foundation of certain vices. Continence for what? And especially the alternative which is alone interesting, is this: Continence for the sake of noble deeds or for the sake of thinking? That this is an alternative is clearly shown by the eleventh chapter of the *Oeconomicus*, where Socrates' way of life and that of the gentlemen Ischomachus are contrasted. But the highest end, and that is the Socratic end, for Xenophon, is very rarely mentioned in the *Memorabilia*. But even if it is mentioned and even emphasized in that passage about Socrates' blissful activity, this is, as it were, drowned by the bulk of the conversations which are silent about this highest end. Yet, through the recommendations of gentleman virtue, of vulgar virtue, there always shines through the recommendation of *non-vulgar* virtue. This means that something is presented as true, as unqualifiedly true, and *through* the presentation it appears that it is not unqualifiedly true. Something of this kind is meant when people speak of irony, a term which Xenophon never uses but, I think, which he practices. And we must, I think we must keep this in mind. Now before we turn to the text, I would like to find out whether you would like to bring up any of the points I mentioned or any other point.

**Student:** How is continence the foundation for vice?

**LS:** Because if someone is greedy for wealth, then he must be continent, ya? I mean, he must be alert, he must watch the opportunities, and if he sleeps at the wrong time or is drunk or does any other incontinent things which affect his attention adversely, he will not be able to make money.

**Student:** Was the difference between Plato and Aristotle that you alluded to, the difference that, for, based on the fact that—well, what you said was that there's no *eidos* of *polis* for Plato and that, is this the difference between the *polis* being natural for one and not being natural for the other?

**LS:** I believe so, yes.

**Student:** Well, no, I was just going to follow up on that, maybe. I was curious: if one follows the identification of virtue with one kind of life in Plato and thinks about the fact that the city is not natural somehow, it's hard to see how, without—if that's somehow the same procedure as Xenophon, how we can make the distinction, then, between the two different kinds of virtues? If a man is not by nature a political animal, how can it be that there is a kind of virtue which is just a citizen's virtue, even if it's a gentleman citizen's virtue?

**LS:** And now, well, the vulgar virtue, to use a very clear and strong term, is precisely the political virtue. A man cannot help living in the *polis*, as was shown by Socrates against Aristippus, and I think as would be granted by you without that consideration. And therefore political men on various levels, including the perfect gentlemen, are needed. But there are also men who, while with their body in the *polis*, with their mind transcend the *polis*, and therefore <sup>6</sup>their *peculiar* virtue is not political. Is this so hard to understand?

**Student:** But I recall also your statement about Xenophon being some kind of a mean between Hobbes and Aristotle. It is enticing, really, I'd like to—can you say some more about that?

**LS:** Well, I said quite a bit about it when I spoke of the connection between Xenophon and Machiavelli. This is fundamentally the same thing. Xenophon experiments with extreme things, where virtue touches on vice, according to the earlier notion, and therefore by this very fact comes close to these modern thinkers who tried to divorce politics from virtue proper completely. I think that's the main point.

**Student:** Yeah. But no, I think if Xenophon were to read Aristotle's *Politics*, do you think he would really disagree, or would he say that, for instance, what we read, a number of the things in Book 1, and in Book 5 of the *Ethics*, Book 1 of the *Politics* and Book 5 of the *Ethics*, where Aristotle deals with the economic preconditions of political life—wouldn't he say, yes, that's the sort of thing that I dealt with also a great deal? And then, when he read the parts about the importance of *logos*, wouldn't he say [that] this is true, but this is not what *he* emphasized.

**LS:** What he Xenophon emphasizes?

**Student:** Yeah.

**LS:** Well, Xenophon emphasizes too that *logos* is peculiar to man, and this is obvious, as obvious to Xenophon as it is to Aristotle. Now, but I think something very simple, when you speak of the First Book of the *Politics*, the argument regarding slavery. I believe Xenophon, just as Plato, would say [that] this is good as far as it goes, but it does not go very far. What is the use of these nitwits as slaves? You know what a natural slave means: a fellow who is very strong, he can carry trunks of trees as we would carry pens, pen holders. But he is very—he is stupid. And so one would have to say he wouldn't know the numbers, really. He would count one, and then after he has carried that away, two, and so on. These, this kind of slaves are not very useful—in certain connections, yes, but not for all the purposes. And when Aristotle speaks later on of slavery, in the Seventh Book, I think it is, then he says slaves must be decently treated, of course, and part of the decent treatment is the prospect of emancipation. Now the natural slaves of Book 1 cannot be emancipated, so there is here a considerable difficulty regarding slavery which Plato and Xenophon *avoid* by not saying that there is natural slavery—speaking now politically, that there is no natural slavery, but slaves are people who have been taken prisoners in war or in slave raids, and people do this because they need or believe to need their services, and that is all there is to it. And I think similar considerations would also apply to other things, although none occurs to me at the moment. That is the most, I think the most striking difficulty in Aristotle's *Politics*. So there is a connection. I mean, would Aristotle and Xenophon—if we can bear to imagine such a dialogue, Xenophon would say that you assert slavery to be natural is connected with your assertion that the *polis* is natural, because that the *polis* is not possible without slaves would as a practical proposition have been granted by Xenophon and Plato, although Plato in the *Republic* silently abolishes slavery. But this presupposes, of course, that such a polity like that of the *Republic* is possible. If it is not possible there will be slavery.

**Student:** Yeah, well, if we were to generalize from what Aristotle does, the crucial point is that the natural differences between man and man are so great with respect to ruling and being ruled, whether you want to call—I mean, one doesn't have to call it slavery, as to make clear that there is a natural basis for the *polis*. But would Xenophon and Plato agree with that?

**LS:** No, they would agree with that, but there are—great difficulties arise here, difficulties of which Aristotle himself was of course aware. The natural rulers are not so manifest in their ruling capacity as his argument presupposes. If, as both Plato and Aristotle say, they had the bodies of gods as well as the mind, then it would be easy, but—so, it is a hard thing. And the same, similar considerations would apply also to the other regimes.

**Student:** Well, if then the question [that] later comes up is: Why did Aristotle then take the distinction more seriously than Xenophon and Plato?

**LS:** Which distinction do you mean?

**Student:** Between natural ruler and natural ruled.

**LS:** Because Aristotle is trying to give as natural an account of the *polis* as possible, as unproblematical an account of the *polis* as possible. That he also does in another way in the *Ethics* too. The tensions within the *polis* are of course in many [cases] in Aristotle, when he speaks of practical matters, admitted by Aristotle. But <sup>7</sup>he denies that they are *essential* and essentially destructive of the *polis*. And that is different, I think, in Plato and in Xenophon. Aristotle's solution is more—how shall I say it?—establishmentarian than that of Plato and Xenophon. Aristotle is reconciled to the world as it is to a higher degree than Plato and Xenophon. Whether this contributed to his great popularity in the Middle Ages I do not know.

**Student:** If it's the case that political virtues are not connected with natural ends of men and women who don't transcend political life, then what accounts for the restraint that, what accounts for the great emphasis on virtue in Plato and Xenophon? Why don't they, even if they do touch on the connection, the possible connection between virtue and vice, why don't they perhaps go as far as Machiavelli?

**LS:** Ya, but in the case of Plato it is simpler to answer the question, but the same is true of Xenophon. They make a distinction between *genuine* virtue, solid virtue, and vulgar virtue, between genuine or solid virtue, say, Socrates' virtue and vulgar virtue. And now vulgar virtue is a kind of *mutilated form* of genuine virtue. In other words, vulgar virtue <sup>8</sup>somehow *points* to genuine virtue. It derives its respectability, its true respectability, from its connection with genuine virtue. It is an image of true virtue, ultimately, the reasons for the vulgar virtues would be the same as the reasons for genuine virtue, but with modifications. *Cruder*, *cruder*. More simplistic.

**Student:** Does—but if it is the case that because of the incapacities of most men, their virtues do not actually come, actually contribute to the acquisition of genuine or solid virtues, what reason do they have for living the virtuous life? I mean, are there other ends which would not be, other ends which they—

**LS:** You can, yes, say the *polis* is that end. Humans living together. But only as living together, and even if as tolerably decent living together, is something different from thinking. So the

distinction would remain. They are not *wholly* unrelated to each other. The mere fact that the same *name* is applied to both shows that they have something serious in common.

**Student:** Wouldn't the case that some men by nature are incapable of genuine virtue, and that the most they can aspire to is vulgar virtue, and that in a state, once the state exists, if there is going to be any virtue at all that comes to the people by the state, it would have to be of the vulgar kind?

**LS:** Yes, and what follows from that?

**Student:** Well, what I'd like to know is, why have men stopped trying to do that? You said that since Hobbes and Locke, and this new modern—

**LS:** Oh, ya, I see.

**Student:** . . . political philosophers the emphasis is on trade and not even on vulgar virtue.

**LS:** Not even on vulgar virtue.

**Student:** But that seems to me to be somewhat worthwhile. Why have they turned away?

**LS:** Ya. Well, that can be stated very simply because the way in which people like Machiavelli and Hobbes argue it, is about this. All this teaching of virtue as the foundation or the end of the *polis* has led nowhere. That was too high a goal. Let us aim at lower goals, but at attainable goals. And let's forget about virtue in that sense in which it was used hitherto, including and especially vulgar virtue. Let us consider political society as established for the purpose of self-preservation or comfortable self-preservation or anything of this kind, for a convenient life, but let us forget about virtue. Sure, in order to have a society on a Hobbean and Lockean basis, you must have *something* like virtue, but these virtues would be strictly subordinate to the end. They would [be] strictly *utilitarian*, whereas in the classical notion that is particularly clear in Aristotle, the notion that virtue, [the] virtuous life is good for its own sake, remains of course unimpaired. But the modern people in this early period, what they tried to do was erect the edifice of civil society on a low but solid ground, their assumption being that what is lower is more solid. If we—one can illustrate it as follows, also: in Thomas Aquinas' presentation of the natural inclinations, you have three such inclinations: self-preservation, preservation of the species and what it includes—bringing up of children—and third, knowledge culminating in knowledge of God. In Hobbes and his followers, the two higher inclinations play no role. There, self-preservation is regarded as perfectly sufficient. Whether all men are concerned with being virtuous when they are not seen is a difficult question. But that all men are concerned with not being killed, this is a safe assumption; that's solid ground and therefore a solid starting point. And so [the] later development, not the least of which is the emergence of political economy, stems from that. To repeat again Montesquieu's remark: the ancients talked of virtue, the ancient politicians talked of virtue, ours talk of commerce.

**Student:** Could you describe vulgar virtue?

**LS:** Pardon?

**Student:** Could you describe what you mean by vulgar virtue?

**LS:** What we ordinarily understand by virtue. It can be called vulgar only—if you want—to the extent to which one understands genuine virtue, the virtue of the philosopher. And since this is very hard, but since we all have some understanding of non-philosophic virtue, let us identify virtue for the time being with non-philosophic virtue. Ya? I mean, to be honest, to be brave, to be just and fair, and to have that measure of prudence without which one would constantly get into trouble.

**Student:** Then are you suggesting that someone who says that modern political society is based on the Protestant ethic is giving us undue flattery, and that really modern political society is based on continence not necessarily in the service of noble aims?

**LS:** Well, I did not speak of modern political society. I spoke of modern political philosophy. And modern political society has surely other sources than modern political philosophy. Think only of the continual power, at least in the seventeenth century, of the religious traditions and of the practical motivations which lent <sup>10</sup>to toleration, for example—you know, the misery of the religious wars and the persecution that brought people and, in the first place, the men called at that time the politicians, to say: Well, let's forget about that and let us make the state as tolerant as possible. And there were some religious people, tiny minorities, who demanded toleration on religious grounds. <sup>11</sup>There was a confluence of *all* these things: the discovery of America, the change in the trade routes, and all these kind of things; that is also of enormous importance, because otherwise England and Holland would not have acquired the position which they did acquire—I mean, the Mediterranean became relatively unimportant. These things one would all have to take into consideration. But I spoke only of modern political philosophy.

**Student:** Well, then, if I changed my statement to say that modern political society, to the extent that it's based on modern political thought, that then to attribute that to the Protestant ethic would be undue flattery.

**LS:** Again, I must make another—I spoke of this foundational or heroic period, the seventeenth century, but then in the eighteenth century already, and more perhaps at the beginning of the nineteenth century, a great reaction to early modernity took place, a reaction which more or less coincided with the reaction to the French Revolution. <sup>12</sup>I mean, the movement which begins roughly with Rousseau and ends roughly with Hegel, and what such people like Hegel thought can be stated as follows: that there was such a lowering of the standards in the seventeenth century, but what he did was to make a synthesis of the best in, say, in Plato and Aristotle, with that tough contribution contributed by the moderns. And that this solution, the Hegelian solution, is superior to its ingredients and therefore a true analysis of modern society or of the doctrine animating, it would not come to this result. It's, I'm afraid, a bit complicated. Yes?

**Student:** Would it be fair to say that, from the statement in question, that the difference between Xenophon and Aristotle on the question of the two kinds of virtues stems from the different understanding of what nature is rather than the, well, let's say the prior consideration as to what

nature is? For instance, in terms of Xenophon, nature would be understood as some kind of perfection, whereas for Aristotle nature is understood in a different way, which you already spelled out.

**LS:** Perhaps, but I don't see the evidence in Xenophon for making such a distinction. There are, we have read the chapter four—

**Student:** How is it, I mean, this might not be sufficient evidence, what about the instance with Nicias' groom? I mean, Socrates seems to take his stand by the nature, the nature of the horse . . . .

**LS:** Yes, yes. But that is an analogy: just as a horse does not need money for being good, provided it has a good soul, I, Socrates, do not need money to become good or to be good *since* I have a good soul, ya? That's something different. So what the two virtues, of the horse and of Socrates, have in common: that they are natural, that's true, that they are beyond convention. But in vulgar virtue, convention in one way or the other enters. Well, we will read later on in the *Memorabilia* a chapter on justice which will give us some clearer notion of where convention enters. Perhaps before. Ya, I think the next chapter, chapter two of [the] Second Book, will already give us a notion of where convention enters. Yes?

**Student:** Nature plays a larger [role] in the bulk of virtue in Plato, doesn't it? I was thinking in the *Republic* it seems that the vulgar virtue seemed closely connected with what men are naturally fitted for doing, what is their natural function, and the *polis* actualizing this, the ideal *polis* actualizing that function or functions . . . .

**LS:** Ya, that is true. In the *Republic* one can say that Plato experiments with the notion where everyone does what is by nature good for him and at the same time for the *polis*. There is nothing of this kind in Xenophon or in Aristotle. So then I suggest we turn then to the passage where we left off. And after having refuted Aristippus, Socrates makes the following statement. Can you begin in paragraph 20 again? —

[break in tape]

**Mr. Williamson:** —is mentioned.

**LS:** No, before. Paragraph 20.

**Mr. Williamson:** “Moreover, indolence and present enjoyment can never bring the body into good condition, as trainers say, neither do they put into the soul knowledge of any value, but strenuous effort leads up to good and noble deeds, as good men say.”

**LS:** So you see—no, one second. You see here there are three good uses of continence [and] endurance mentioned: good condition of the body, worthwhile knowledge in the soul, and noble and good deeds. And only in two cases does Xenophon refer to authorities. In the case of good condition of the body, he refers to gymnastic trainers; and in the case of the noble deeds, he refers to the good men. As far as worthwhile knowledge in the soul is concerned, he does not

refer to any authority. He does this perhaps in the sequel, where he refers to three authorities mentioned by name. The first is Hesiod, the second is Epicharmus, and the third is Prodicus. Now, that Prodicus in this context would stand for the good men is obvious and will become obvious to you when you read his story of Heracles at the Crossroads. Epicharmus can easily be regarded as representative of philosophers. He's the only one of the three—no, not the only one of the three, but he is one poet who figures in the collection of the pre-Socratics, so he was something of a philosopher. As for Hesiod and gymnastic training, gymnastic comes, as you know, from *gymnos*: naked, stripped. Hesiod, in his *Works and Days*, has two verses: one must sow stripped, one must plow stripped, one must reap stripped,<sup>ii</sup> namely, because it is hard work. Well. Now, let us then turn to look.

**Reader:**

And so says Hesiod somewhere:

“Wickedness can be had in abundance easily: smooth is the road and very high she dwells. But in front of virtue the gods immortal have put sweat: long and steep is the path to her and rough at first; but when you reach the top, then at length the road is easy, hard though it was.”<sup>iii</sup>

“And we have the testimony of Epicharmus—”

**LS:** Ya. That is, Socrates interprets this occasionally [that] virtue is easy, when we have reached the top; virtue is easy, although it is hard, in the *Protagoras*, in this passage where he interprets a poet. Now, yes, and read the quote from Epicharmus.

**Reader:**

“And we have the testimony of Epicharmus too in the line:

“The gods demand of us toil as the price of all good things.”

And elsewhere he says:

“Knave, yearn not for the soft things, lest thou earn the hard.” (II.1.20)

**LS:** Yes, I think I mentioned last time that the three authorities mentioned here speak of the divine support for the recommendation of hard work and of continence. Socrates, speaking to Aristippus, had not spoken of it. Yes, now we come to Prodicus.

**Reader:** “Aye, and Prodicus the wise expresses himself to the like effect concerning Virtue in the essay ‘On Heracles’ that he recites to throngs of listeners. This, so far as I remember, is how he puts it:

“When Heracles was passing from boyhood to youth's estate, wherein the young, now becoming their own masters, show whether they will approach life by the path of virtue or the path of vice, he went out into a quiet place, and sat pondering which road to take.” (2.I.21-22)

**LS:** So two ways, ya? Yes.

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<sup>ii</sup> Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 391.

<sup>iii</sup> Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 285.



**Reader:** “And there appeared two women of great stature making towards him. The one was fair to see and of high bearing; and her limbs were adorned with purity, her eyes with modesty; sober was her figure, and her robe was white. The other was plump and soft, with high feeding. Her face was made up to heighten its natural white and pink, her figure to exaggerate her height. Open-eyed was she; and dressed so as to disclose all her charms. Now she eyed herself; anon looked whether any noticed her; and often stole a glance at her own shadow.” (II.1.22)

**LS:** Ya. Now let us first—so these two women, these two tall women were here. Now, they have different character, characteristics, which are mentioned here. The first, of course, has bashful eyes, and the second impudent eyes; and the impudence of her eyes is shown most clearly by the way in which she looks around and even at her own shadow. And the first had a white robe, just as the woman who appeared to Socrates in prison in the *Crito*. The color of the robe of the second is not stated, probably because <sup>13</sup>one saw only the color of the flesh. Surely, the first is extremely decent, and the second is extremely indecent. This much is clear.

**Student:** She was what?

**LS:** Indecent, ya. Yes. Now let us see.

**Reader:** “When they drew nigh to Heracles, the first pursued the even tenor of her way: but the other, all eager to outdo her, ran to meet him, crying: ‘Heracles, I see that you are in doubt which path to take towards life. Make me your friend; follow me, and I will lead you along the pleasantest and easiest road. You shall taste all the sweets of life; and hardship you shall never know.’” (II.1.23)

**LS:** Ya. Yes. They have—as appears, they have, the two women of very opposite character come together. They had come together and then, when they came *near* to Heracles, the one rushed up to Heracles and the other stayed behind. Yes. And then she begins her speech.

**Reader:**

“‘First, of wars and worries you shall not think, but shall ever be considering what choice of food or drink you can find, what sight or sound will delight you, what touch or perfume; what tender love can give you most joy, what bed the softest slumbers; and how to come by all these pleasures with least trouble. And should there arise misgiving that lack of means may stint your enjoyments, never fear that I may lead you into winning them by toil and anguish of body and soul. Nay; you shall have the fruits of others’ toil, and refrain from nothing that can bring you gain. For to my companions I give authority to pluck advantage where they will.’

“Now when Heracles heard this, he asked, ‘Lady, pray what is your name?’

“‘My friends call me Happiness,’ she said, ‘but among those that hate me I am nicknamed Vice.’” (II.1.24-26)

**LS:** They do not nickname her misery, ya? No one calls her misery, that is surprising. Yes?

**Reader:** “Meantime the other had drawn near, and she said: ‘I, too, am come to you, Heracles: I know your parents and I have taken note of your character during the time of your education.’

**LS:** Ya, “your nature,” is perhaps more literal, better.

**Reader:** ““Therefore I hope that, if you take the road that leads to me, you will turn out a right good doer of high and noble deeds, and I shall be yet more highly honoured and more illustrious for the blessings I bestow. But I will not deceive you by a pleasant prelude: I will rather tell you truly the things that are, as the gods have ordained them.”” (II.1.27)

**LS:** Ya. So you see here the gods come clearly in also. And this other woman, the noble woman, has observed the *parents* of Heracles, whoever they may be, and his *physis*, his nature. The bad woman has not made any reference to his parents and to his *physis*. And, but on the other hand, virtue expects some benefit for herself. Then she will become more honored still than she already is, if Heracles follows her advice. And as for the last line of the passage you read, tell truthfully how the gods have arranged *tà ónta*, the beings, and then in the next line she says, of the *tôn gàr óntōn agathōn kai kalōn*, of the beings good and noble. So she will only speak—she uses the more comprehensive term, the beings, but limits it by the adjectives she supplies afterward. This is a question—how beings and good and noble are related to each other—and this is taken up later on in the *Memorabilia*. Yes?

**Reader:** ““For of beings good and fair, the gods give nothing to man without toil and effort. If you want the favour of the gods, you must worship the gods: if you desire the love of friends, you must do good to your friends: if you covet honour from a city, you must aid that city: if you are fain to win the admiration of all Hellas for virtue, you must strive to do good to Hellas: if you want land to yield you fruits in abundance, you must cultivate that land: if you are resolved to get wealth from flocks, you must care for those flocks: if you essay to grow great through war and want power to liberate your friends and subdue your foes, you must learn the arts of war from those who know them and must practise their right use: and if you want your body to be strong, you must accustom your body to be the servant of your mind, and train it with toil and sweat.”” (II.1.28)

**LS:** <sup>14</sup>When Socrates spoke in paragraph 19, he had spoken of self-admiration as a reward. Now Virtue, that is the name of this woman, she replaces self-admiration by admiration on the part of the whole of Greece. Yes?

**Reader:** “And Vice, as Prodicus tells, answered and said: ‘Heracles, mark you how hard and long is that road to joy, of which this woman tells? But I will lead you by a short and easy road to happiness.’” (II.1.28)

**LS:** So Socrates, or Xenophon, reminds us here again <sup>15</sup>that it is Prodicus who we hear speaking. Prodicus who was a rather soft living man. Yes?

**Reader:** “And Virtue said: ‘What good thing is thine, poor wretch, or what pleasant thing dost thou know, if thou wilt do nought to win them?’” (II.1.28-29)

**LS:** Wretch, you wretch: this was also used by Socrates when he talked to Xenophon, and is never used in the *Memorabilia* in any other conversation. So that virtue to vice equal to Socrates

to Xenophon. And one could of course say that this Xenophon was the young Xenophon who had not yet undergone the severity of the Socratic training. That's where we are, all right. Yes?

**Reader:** “Thou dost not even tarry for the desire of pleasant things, but fillest thyself with all things before thou desirest them, eating before thou art hungry, drinking before thou art thirsty, getting thee cooks, to give zest to eating, buying thee costly wines and running to and fro in search of snow in summer, to give zest to drinking; to soothe thy slumbers it is not enough for thee to buy soft coverlets, but thou must have frames for thy beds. For not toil, but the tedium of having nothing to do, makes thee long for sleep. Thou dost rouse lust by many a trick, when there is no need, using men as women: thus thou trainest thy friends, waxing wanton by night, consuming in sleep the best hours of day.” (II.1.30)

**LS:** Incidentally, he said at the beginning of paragraph 30, “Virtue said.” Now Heracles had never asked Virtue for her name, while he had asked Vice for her name. Yes.

**Reader:** “Immortal art thou, yet the outcast of the gods, the scorn of good men. Praise, sweetest of all things to hear, thou hearest not: the sweetest of all sights thou beholdest not, for never yet hast thou beheld a good work wrought by thyself.” (II.1.31)

**LS:** A noble work, it's here I believe of some importance.

**Reader:** “Who will believe what thou dost say? Who will grant what thou dost ask? Or what sane man will dare join thy throng? While thy votaries are young their bodies are weak, when they wax old, their souls are without sense; idle and sleek they thrive in youth, withered and weary they journey through old age, and their past deeds bring them shame, their present deeds distress. Pleasure they ran through in their youth: hardship they laid up for their old age. But I company with gods and good men, and no fair deed of god or man is done without my aid. I am first in honour among the gods and among men that are akin to me: to craftsmen a beloved fellow-worker, to masters a faithful guardian of the house, to servants a kindly protector: good helpmate in the toils of peace, staunch ally in the deeds of war, best partner in friendship.” (II.1.31-32)

**LS:** Yes. There is one point. Virtue calls Vice an immortal, whereas the opposite is never said. As in immortal and cast out from the gods, as it were, a fallen goddess, that is she. Think—ya, well, think of Aphrodite. From this point of view, she would be an outcast of the gods. Nothing is said of Virtue being a goddess or an immortal, understandably enough, because the gods do not lead a life of hardship. They live easily, which would rather be the one than the other.

**Reader:**

“To my friends meat and drink bring sweet and simple enjoyment: for they wait till they crave them. And a sweeter sleep falls on them than on idle folk: they are not vexed at awaking from it, nor for its sake do they neglect to do their duties. The young rejoice to win the praise of the old; the elders are glad to be honoured by the young; with joy they recall their deeds past, and their present well-doing is joy to them, for through me they are dear to the gods, lovely to friends, precious to their native land. And when comes the appointed end, they lie not forgotten and dishonoured, but live on, sung and remembered for all time. O Heracles, thou son of goodly

parents, if thou wilt labour earnestly on this wise, thou mayest have for thine own the most blessed happiness.”

“Such, in outline, is Prodicus' story of the training of Heracles by Virtue; only he has clothed the thoughts in even finer phrases than I have done now. But anyhow, Aristippus, it were well that you should think on these things and try to show some regard for the life that lies before you.” (II.1.33-34)

**LS:** Ya. Now we of course are not told anything of how Aristippus was affected by either Socrates' or Prodicus' speech. But there are a few broader difficulties here which we can consider only after having read the whole. The good men praise the life of hard work and noble deeds, and <sup>16</sup>this way of life culminates in the exercise of the kingly art, of which Aristippus had spoken—of the art which, according to Aristippus, Socrates seems to regard as happiness, this way of life has its foundation in continence. But there is another way of life which also has its foundation in continence, for continence is required also for putting science into the soul. And this way of life culminates in Socrates' blissful activity. About this way of life, Hesiod, Epicharmus, and Prodicus remain silent. In other words, at the Crossroads at which Heracles is wooed by Virtue and Vice, not two, but three ways meet. The mere fact that the way of life of the gods is neither the way of life recommended by Virtue nor the way of life recommended by Vice shows that there is a third way or, to borrow Aristippus' expression, a middle way. The middle way of which Aristippus spoke was the life as a stranger. Xenophon himself, for a considerable part of his adult life, lived as a stranger. The two-foldness of the ways described by Prodicus is as incomplete as the two-foldness of the speeches which are commissioned to state their cases in Aristophanes' *Clouds*. Socrates' *logos*, his speech, is neither the just speech nor the unjust speech. The way of life recommended, the middle way of life recommended by Aristippus may be impossible as Socrates asserts, but the Socratic middle way is viable. Aristippus opposes the simply unpolitical life to the simply political life, but there is a third way of life, which is neither simply political nor simply unpolitical. Yes?

**Reader:** “On noticing that his eldest son, Lamprocles—”

**LS:** One moment. Before we begin that, we have to consider something more in general. We should, I'm sorry, we should read the first two lines.

**Reader:** “On noticing that his eldest son, Lamprocles, was out of humour with his mother, he said—” (II.2.1)

**LS:** And so on. And so he, Socrates, deals here with the question of the proper relation of children to their parents. And in the following chapter, he deals with the relation of, the proper relation of brothers. Now these subjects may be subsumed under the heading: relatives. Then in chapter four, Xenophon—let us read the beginning of chapter four.

**Reader:** “Again, I once heard him give a discourse on friendship that was likely, as I thought, to help greatly in the acquisition and use of friends.” (II.4.1)

**LS:** So now friends, but as here, a special problem regarding friendship. And that goes on, and let us only look at the beginning of chapter seven in the same Book.

**Reader:** “To pass to another subject. The distresses of his friends that arose from ignorance he tried to cure by advice, those that were due to want by telling them how to help one another according to their power.” (II.7.1)

**LS:** Yes. So we can—it is obvious that chapters four to ten deal with friends. But it is nowhere explicitly said by Xenophon: I wish now to discuss Socrates’ views, deeds, and speeches regarding friendship. This, the utmost of generality it reaches is what we have seen at the beginning of chapter seven. Now let us turn to the beginning of Book 3.

**Reader:** “I will now explain how he helped those who were eager to win distinction—” (III.1.1)

**LS:** Ya. Now let us stop here. So ya, who were eager or desirous for the noble things. And this is the subject of the first seven chapters, perhaps beyond. That question we will take up when we come up to it. So there is a clear plan, at least up to now. But this—but Xenophon does not tell us at the beginning of chapter two or in the sequel what the subject of this particular section is, but he does so in the beginning of Book 3. Now one implication is of some broader importance: that those who strive for the noble things, which means in the context for political office, and the friends are two different subjects. The friends are not the men desirous for political office and vice-versa. That is of some importance with view to the question we have seen before: Who precisely are Socrates’ friends? Or he had—remember from the discussion of Critias and Alcibides, Socrates was attractive to them because he taught the political things, but Socrates himself did not go in for that. Yes?

**Student:** I assume that’s a question of paragraph 32 in chapter one?

**LS:** Paragraph 32?

**Student:** Yes, when Virtue speaks, she says, “but I company with gods”—I’m sorry, “I am first in honor among the gods and among men that are akin to me.” Is the qualification meant to apply both to the gods and the men or just to the—?

**LS:** No, no, the same word. I am together with the gods, with gods, I am together with good men. Same word. No, but sometimes the translators think they must improve on the author and to repeat the same word is regarded as less good than to vary the expression, because that, the first, seems to show a lack of copiousness or a lack of rich flow of language.

**Student:** Well, then that’s in the line immediately after that: “I’m honored most of all by the gods and by the men.”

**LS:** Ya, that honored most of all by both gods and men.

**Student:** Would this—what does this *prosēkei* mean in that—

**LS:** Ya, to which? . . . the human beings to whom it belongs. I mean, she makes here a distinction between the gods are all—honor [her], just as we made a distinction before between the divine, where was that? Where did I find that? Ya, at the beginning of that paragraph: I’m together with gods and I’m together with good men. Not all men admire virtue but all gods do, and she is a companion not of all men but of all gods.

**Student:** So you mean, so that the *hoîs prosekei* refers to the *toîs agathoîs* of the previous? That you—

**LS:** I believe it refers to *anthrôpois*.

**Student:** Yes, but in reference to the good man, these *anthrôpois* . . .

**LS:** Ya, ya. The good, those to whom it belongs are the good men. So now we have still some time and can begin the next chapter.

**Reader:**

On noticing that his eldest son, Lamprocles, was out of humour with his mother, he said:

“Tell me, my boy, do you know that some men are called ungrateful?”

“Indeed I do,” replied the young man.

“Do you realise how they come to have this bad name?”

“I do; the word is used of those who do not show the gratitude that it is in their power to show for benefits received.”

“You take it, then, that the ungrateful are reckoned among the unjust?”

“Yes.”

“Now, seeing that enslavement is considered a just or an unjust act according as the victims are friends or enemies, have you ever considered whether the case of ingratitude is analogous, ingratitude being unjust towards friends, but just towards enemies?”

“Indeed I have; and I think that it is always unjust not to show gratitude for a favour from whomsoever it is received, be he friend or enemy.” (II.2.1-2)

**LS:** Yes. Now this is the beginning of the argument which will lead up to the point that the highest duty of gratitude belongs to the parents, and therefore in particular [for] Lamprocles in relation to his mother. So Socrates begins the argument accordingly, and he first makes him grant that ingratitude is the worst kind of injustice because in most other actions, if they are committed to enemies—most of the actions generally regarded as unjust—if they are committed against enemies they are all right. But ingratitude is bad *even* if it is practiced against enemies. That is the first point which Socrates has reached at this point. Of course, there is—one has to think about that, if this is true. If a man was a benefactor and then became a tyrant, a vicious tyrant, must then the duty of gratitude continue to be obligatory after that fact? And the same would of course be true if it is a man from another city and the cities are at war: How far can this gratitude extend during the war? I mean, <sup>17</sup>a man may have pangs for having to kill him, but the pangs do not prevent him from killing if he <sup>18</sup>follows his citizens’ duty. This is of course not mentioned, but that is in a way a premise of the whole argument. Yes, now let us go on.

**Reader:**

“If that is so, must not ingratitude be injustice pure and simple?”

He assented.

“Therefore the greater the benefits received the greater the injustice of not showing gratitude?”

He agreed again.

“Now what deeper obligation can we find than that of children to their parents? To their parents children owe their being and their portion of all fair sights and all blessings that the gods bestow on men—gifts so highly praised by us that all will sacrifice anything rather than lose them; and the reason why governments have made death the penalty for the greatest crimes is that the fear of it is the strongest deterrent against crime.” (II.2.3)

**LS:** Here you have a simple example of the difference between *kalon*—noble, beautiful—and *agathón*. So many *noble things* to see, so many fair things to see, and to *participate in* so many good things. Sight has very much to do with the noble. What pleases to the sight, to the mere sight without anything else, this is beautiful. For example, there may be other things which please only with a view to later tasting, let’s say a duck. That is not the same as something which is noble, beautiful, only with a regard to sight. Kant’s later famous formula—disinterested pleasure—that has something to do with this understanding of beautiful. Now the argument is here clear: ingratitude is the worst kind of injustice. But no one has greater benefactors than his parents, ever, and that settles it. Lamprocles’ conduct to his mother has been refuted <sup>19</sup>beyond remedy. Yes? But now one could say another objection. We may owe all these things to our parents, but the parents may not have *intended* to benefit us. We may only be the byproducts of their sexual intercourse, and therefore Socrates faces this question in the next paragraph.

**Reader:** “Of course you don’t suppose that lust provokes men to beget children, when the streets and the stews are full of means to satisfy that? We obviously select for wives the women who will bear us the best children, and then marry them to raise a family.” (II.2.4)

**LS:** So this is now excluded. It cannot . . . the parents intentionally begot children in order to benefit the children, and therefore now the argument seems to be watertight. Or is it not? Yes.

**Student:** Well, there’s the problem, I mean, if one owes all the good things to one’s parents, one might also owe all the bad things.

**LS:** Ya, but—that is true, that’s quite true. You mean since life is not, consists not merely of noble or beautiful and good things. Yes, but that is true. But on the other hand, life, *mere* life, Socrates has provided for that. Mere life is preferred, as is shown in the critical cases, when we are threatened with death; and therefore whether life is so sweet, surely death is terrible. And therefore, so that is—what you said is quite true, but now it is watertight, isn’t it? Or is there something omitted?

**Student:** I don’t think it means . . . refers to original sin or to . . .

**LS:** But still there are—

**Student:** Or to some modern theory of suppression of your father. [Laughter]

**LS:** Ya, there is another point there, <sup>20</sup>on the basis of Xenophon alone, according to which parents generate children to have someone who takes care of them in their old age. This is of course not mentioned here. Yes?

**Student:** Mr. Strauss, I wonder also about this simple identification—well, no, I guess I see part of the answer already, but <sup>21</sup>he seems at a certain point to identify gratitude with justice or to include gratitude under justice. Is that—

**LS:** Ya, but the clear, clear injustice. In other cases, it is not so clear—they must make distinctions. If you steal, but from an enemy, then it is not an unjust act. But if you are ungrateful, then you commit an unjust act *regardless*. That is what Lamprocles has said. And therefore the clearest, let us say, the clearest case of injustice, of an injustice, is ingratitude.

**Student:** Yeah, I think what I had in mind is this. Suppose one grants that ingratitude is always unjust, but I don't think it would follow then that justice always demands gratitude.

**LS:** No, no it won't. No, surely not, because justice as justice, disregarding the case of ingratitude, presupposes the distinction between friends and enemies and is therefore something different. Let us only read the next paragraph and then we must, must stop.

**Reader:** “We obviously select for wives the women who will bear us the best children, and then marry them to raise a family. The man supports the woman who is to share with him the duty of parentage and provides for the expected children whatever he thinks will contribute to their benefit in life—” (II.2.4-5)

**LS:** Ya, he contributes, or is this not the end of the— ?

**Mr. Williamson:** Not in this edition.

**LS:** All right.

**Mr. Williamson:** You want me to?

**LS:** Let's see. Ya, “accumulates as much of it as he can.” Ya. That is the end. Accumulates as much of it as he can. Now, where does he? Ya. He, that is the man, the husband, and we must of course think that this is here—Socrates is himself a father. How is this compatible with what we have heard about Socrates' conduct? Did he not say he would need as little as possible, to need nothing is divine, and to need as little as possible is the closest approximation to the divine? And we have heard frequently on various occasions, in various contexts, that Socrates did not accumulate (as he translates) as much as he possibly could. Socrates speaks here of the father in general without reflecting on whether it would apply to him. But of course the case of his wife is entirely different, and the wife is his subject because his son was angry, not at Socrates, at his father, but at his mother. And now we have to stop. Yes?



**Student:** Couldn't Socrates still have gone about accumulating what he considered best for his children, without necessarily—? . . . .

**LS:** Ya, but as much—but the quantitative thing, that is the problem. As many, as much, as many things as possible.

**Student:** But I mean, even considering that, couldn't he [have]<sup>22</sup> conceivably attempted to accumulate as much as he possibly could of something that benefited his children?

**LS:** Ya, but still he speaks of the husband or father in general. And one must see how his own conduct jibes with that. And the point is—for example, you remember the statements in the *Oeconomicus* where he states that he has very little, and that is perfectly sufficient for him. What he describes is, we can say, the *normal* father. Was Socrates a normal father? That would be the question. In the eighteenth century, when Socrates was preached up by people who wanted to have a non-biblical hero, a non-biblical pious man, the theologians of course tried to find out everything which is *defective* in Socrates; and one of them wrote a Latin thesis which has about this title: that Socrates was *not* a good husband nor a good father, and hence, since he neglected these *obvious* duties,<sup>23</sup> one can draw all kinds of conclusions about his performance of his other duties. Or take another point. If Xenophon is right in what he says in the first chapter of the *Memorabilia*, that he was always in the open—and meaning here in the gymnasium, palaestra, or in the marketplace—how could he take care of the education of his children? That [he] would have, he must have left to that much maligned Xanthippe. Ya. Yes?

**Student:** . . . the . . . arguments about being devoted to one's parents . . . . That argument seems to ignore the fact that parents could have good intentions but they may not be the right intentions toward them, as well as the fact that they may not be able to fulfill their intentions properly, so—

**LS:** Yes, that is, yes.

**Student:** . . . it would assume the gift of life outweighs all those, all those detractions for one might owe to, I mean, does the, does the simple gift of life, does that completely out, outbalance any of these other, these detractions from what one might owe to—

**LS:** Ya, Xenophon, Socrates, mentions therefore other things. The . . .<sup>iv</sup> here is Socrates taken to find exactly that women with whom he could generate the most perfect offspring. And then in the sequel he speaks of what the mother of Lamprocles, the great care she has taken . . . and after that . . . build up the case . . . of Lamprocles. Well, the whole argument is of course, if we want to use that term, a rhetorical argument. I mean, just as in any case of litigation, each attorney builds up the strongest possible case for his client, and in this way Socrates here builds up the strongest possible case . . . .

[end of tape]

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<sup>1</sup> Deleted "what"

<sup>2</sup> Deleted "Reformation"

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<sup>iv</sup> Though the words are inaudible, it is clear that Strauss is laughing as he speaks here.

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- <sup>3</sup> Deleted “not by men”  
<sup>4</sup> Deleted “now, if we”  
<sup>5</sup> Deleted “the chapter”  
<sup>6</sup> Deleted “their virtue is not”  
<sup>7</sup> Deleted “they are that but”  
<sup>8</sup> Deleted “is”  
<sup>9</sup> Deleted “use”  
<sup>10</sup> Deleted “to the kind of”  
<sup>11</sup> Deleted “These things”  
<sup>12</sup> Deleted “and but more or less”  
<sup>13</sup> Deleted “it, one could”  
<sup>14</sup> Deleted: “Ya. She speaks here, now let me see—ya, no, Socrates. Oh yes”  
<sup>15</sup> Deleted: “that it’s Xenophon”  
<sup>16</sup> Deleted “the”  
<sup>17</sup> Deleted “one”  
<sup>18</sup> Deleted “is”  
<sup>19</sup> Deleted “without”  
<sup>20</sup> Deleted “on the basis of the”  
<sup>21</sup> Deleted “it seems”  
<sup>22</sup> Deleted “had”  
<sup>23</sup> Deleted “one can think”

### Session 13: no date

**Leo Strauss:** [in progress] —while confronting difficulties, especially that not only of what the author wants, but also of our preconceptions, and to become aware of one's preconceptions is the first condition for examining these preconceptions, and perhaps that is the greatest use of doing this kind of reading. Now one of these preconceptions, of which I spoke more than once, is this: that in classical antiquity the overall situation, political and intellectual, was the same fundamentally as in modern times. Now that can be made very clear very simply: today we are told that there are always ideologies, and it is assumed, then, [that] just as we have ideologies and a variety of conflicting ideologies, the same was true of classical antiquity. And if the people who are a bit more careful in what they say would say, for instance, that the Declaration of Independence and similar documents, this is the ideology of capitalist society, and there is of course no ideology of communism, but the communists themselves have abandoned this purity of language a long time ago, so probably the *Communist Manifesto* would be the statement of communist ideology. Now in classical antiquity there were class struggles, at least we can call it this way, between the demos and the rich. That does not mean, however, that there were ideologies of the rich on the one hand, and of the poor on the other. And to convince yourself of that, you only would have to read the Third Book of Aristotle's *Politics*, where the cases which both parties make are stated, and only by very loose and almost perverse use of language could this be called ideology. I exaggerate a little bit; these people were opposed to one another, and sometimes there was a murderous hatred, as in Corcyra, but that hate found its expression in language. If they said of one another: "those bastards" (excuse me), can you call that an ideology? But what they said barely went beyond that. So then we must look, not expect this kind of thing in classical antiquity, for reasons which are not manifest. But the mere fact is of some importance.

Now I think we should consider this passage from Plato's *Laws*, in the Tenth Book. There the main speaker brings up the question of the gods, and he says:

Ath. "It is stated by some that all things which are coming into being, or have or will come into being, do so partly by nature, partly by art, and partly owing to chance."

Clin: "Is it not a right statement?"

Ath: "It is likely, to be sure, that what men of science—wise men—say is true. Anyhow, let us follow them up, and consider what it is that the people in their camp really intend."<sup>i</sup>

"It is evident, they assert, that the greatest and most beautiful things are the work of nature and of chance, and the lesser things that of art,—for art receives from nature the great and primary products as being<sup>ii</sup> and itself molds and shapes all the smaller ones, which we commonly call 'artificial.'"<sup>iii</sup>

"I will explain it more clearly. Fire and water and earth and air, they say, all are by nature and chance, and none of them by art; and by means of these, which are wholly inanimate, the bodies which come next—those of the earth, sun, moon and stars—have been brought into existence. It is by chance all these elements move, by the interplay of their respective

<sup>i</sup> In original: "Clinias: 'By all means let us do so.'"

<sup>ii</sup> In original: "existing"

<sup>iii</sup> In original: "Clinias: 'How do you mean?'"

forces, and according as they meet together and combine fittingly—hot with cold, dry with moist, soft with hard, and all such necessary mixtures as result from the chance combination of these opposites—in this way and by those means they have brought into being the whole Heaven and all that is in the Heaven, and all animals, too, and plants—after that all the seasons had arisen from these elements; and all this, as they assert, not owing to reason, nor any god or art, but owing, as we have said, to nature and chance. As a later product of these, art comes; and it, being mortal itself and of mortal birth, begets later playthings which share but little in truth, being images of a sort akin to the arts themselves—images such as painting begets, and music, and the arts which accompany these. Those arts which really produce something serious are such as share their effect with nature—like medicine, agriculture, and gymnastic. Politics too, as they say, shares to a small extent in nature, but mostly in art; and in like manner all legislation which is based on untrue assumptions is due, not to nature, but to art.” (888e-889e)<sup>iv</sup>

So here these people, whoever they may have been, who took the view which Plato combats—the view which probably would be called today materialistic—*implied*, and it seems necessarily implied, that politics is not something serious. This position has disappeared from the world in modern times, and therefore that has infinite implications. Again, I must mention the name of Hobbes as a man <sup>i</sup>in whom we see this great change very clearly for the first time. Hobbes started from such premises roughly as those stated here, but he comes to the conclusion that politics is the most serious of all arts. So how is this possible? I read to you a passage from Hobbes, the *Leviathan*, near the beginning of chapter 26: “my design is not to show what is law here and there<sup>v</sup> what the lawyers do, but what is law (as *Plato, Aristotle, Cicero*, and divers others have done, without taking upon them the profession of the study of the law).”<sup>vi</sup> So the people whom Hobbes follows are in one sense Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, the non-materialistic philosophers of antiquity. And how this came about, that a materialistic account of the universe became the basis of a view according to which politics is of very great, of *paramount* importance, that is the question which we must keep in mind. I do not know whether I made this question clear enough.

You find a restatement, in a way, of what Plato says not altogether surprisingly in Kant, in Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, where he distinguishes two fundamental alternatives, one which he calls dogmatism and the other he calls empiricism. And dogmatism, that is roughly Plato, and empiricism, that is roughly Epicurus *and/or* modern science. Now this dogmatic position is untenable, that is implied in the word. It deserves respect and must in a manner be preserved because it is in agreement with morality and religion, whereas the alternative is not a support, empiricism is not a support of morality and religion. To that extent, the lines we have drawn [hold] up to Kant, in the ancient way, but that is not even historically true or, as you know of the eighteenth century, where radical political reformers based their teaching on a materialistic philosophy. Now, I do not know whether I made clear this question. I believe it is of importance, therefore—yes?

<sup>iv</sup> Strauss reads from *Laws*, trans. R. G. Bury (Loeb Classical Library), vol. 2 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1926).

<sup>v</sup> In original: “my design being not to show what is law here and there”

<sup>vi</sup> Hobbes, *Leviathan*, chap. 26.

**Student:** But in, not the book but the main question, but I believe that your last remarks suggest that one of the bases of the rise of ideology is a kind of corruption of Kant's notion of rational belief—yeah?—what we are obligated to believe in order to make us more capable of fulfilling the moral law. Or rather, what in the absence of knowledge we are obligated to believe in order to make us act morally.

**LS:** I did not suggest that.

**Student:** No?

**LS:** No.

**Student:** I thought that—

**LS:** No. No, I mean, if I have any notion about what is behind ideology, it is something like the continuation of theological dogmatics into the political field.

**Student:** Well, all right, I mean, in a way I don't think that's too far from what I was suggesting. I mean, Kant, that what I was talking about, is sort of making a religion that is a religion in accordance with reason, but—

**LS:** I see. I see, and later, after Kant, when this is no longer believed in, this religion, then it is replaced by—

**Student:** By ideology.

**LS:** Hmm.

**Student (probably Mr. Klein):** Isn't one type of ideology the conviction that it is possible to change things: there is no unchangeable nature but there is the possibility of the end of times in which there is a jump from freedom, from necessity to freedom. In other words, what I mean to say is that whereas, when you look at the description of revolution in Thucydides nothing happens, the poor replace the rich and this goes on forever, this replacement—whereas the assumption, for instance, in the *Communist Manifesto*, is the biblical assumption that there is possible an end in which everything changes, and I think ideology takes over, this idea—

**LS:** Yes, and that is, of course—that presupposes that the standard ideology is the communist ideology. This is defensible but it does not correspond to present-day usage. According to the present-day view, just as there are  $n$  cultures and  $n$  historical or social groups,  $n$  or maybe even  $n$  to the second power, ideologies. But perhaps you are right, one should take Marx's communist doctrine as the standard doctrine. But on the other hand, if you think that there is such a thing called the Brezhnev Doctrine, there was a thing called the Truman Doctrine,<sup>vii</sup> and there [are]<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>vii</sup> The Brezhnev Doctrine was articulated by soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev at a speech to the Fifth Congress of the Polish United Workers' Party in November of 1968. Brezhnev called for the use of military force to intervene in to prevent reform or deviation from the Soviet model of communism ("to maintain indestructible fidelity to the principles of Marxism-Leninism") within the countries of the

now other doctrines of this kind, that is a very different remarkable usage, that one calls this a “doctrine.” I mean, I do not speak now <sup>3</sup> of the validity of these doctrines, I only speak [of] that they are called and understood as doctrines. Yes?

**Student:** I just—I wonder though if the change—what you seem to say is that for those who have a materialist physics in ancient times, politics, because it was not really part of physics, was something of distinctly secondary importance, whereas in modern times, politics—those who are materialists don’t draw that inference about politics. But I wonder, the interesting thing would be: Where is the crucial change? And I wonder if the crucial change doesn’t have something to do with the cognitive status of physics.

**LS:** That I do not know. But I believe that in a wider sense what the meaning of physics is . . . because in modern times the view emerged that physics is for the sake of power, and these people in antiquity understood physics or whatever was its equivalent as something to be practiced for its own sake, and therefore they were not *interested* in politics because politics, however understood, would not be a solution to man’s problem. But contemplation, that is a solution. You see it I think very clearly in Lucretius, who is the one man we can know best because his whole work has been preserved, and there is a materialistic teaching. There is also a teaching about politics, but only about how cities came into being and which changes they undergo, in no way about a best *polis*. You can’t take any hope there. And the hope one can have is only from understanding. But in modern times, this expectation from the theoretical sciences has decreased and, to connect it with this (but this is not the only reason connected with this), the prestige of political science has risen.

**Student:** Yeah, well, if I could state what I’m trying to drive at in a very crude way. If physics as well as politics becomes more a kind of making or, another way to put it, if reason is regarded as less intuitive and more productive, and physics itself is regarded more as one among other human creations or products, then the status between physics and politics seems to be—rather, the difference between physics and politics seems to be less radical than it was for the ancients.

**LS:** Ya, but on the other hand, politics rightly understood in Kant’s sense is based on morality, and morality does not have this character. One could perhaps—<sup>4</sup>one would have to go into the whole immense question of Kant, but one simple point one can say: the ancients, these people of whom I spoke, depreciated politics with a view to its non-natural character. For Kant, politics was, the *polis* was immensely important *because* of the non-natural character of the standards. This is right, ya. Yes?

**Student:** Is, I mean, is the importance of politics that you spoke, that you just referred to through Kant, related to the importance of politics for Hobbes? I mean, is the reason that politics

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Eastern bloc (Poland, the GDR, and Czechoslovakia). The Doctrine retroactively justified the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia earlier that year. The Truman Doctrine originated in a speech made by President Harry Truman on March 12, 1947 before a Joint Session of Congress in which he asked Congress to support the Greek government in its civil war against the Greek communist party. The Doctrine expressed a commitment on the part of the United States to provide political, military, and economic assistance to all democratic nations under threat from external or internal authoritarian forces.

becomes, remains important despite his acceptance of the materialistic teaching because it's not natural?

**LS:** Ya, that is surely connected with that. You mean given the enormous differences between Kant and Hobbes?

**Student:** Well, actually I was more interested in knowing whether, why it is—I mean whether Hobbes thinks the reason why politics is serious despite the fact that he proposes a materialistic teaching. I mean, what does account for the difference of his interest in politics as opposed to the classical materialists' interest in politics?

**LS:** Ya, that is a bit complicated. One reason which I immediately remember is this: that politics deals with the object of man's making and therefore perfect knowledge of it is possible, whereas natural phenomena, since they are not of human making, cannot be adequately understood. That is one reason that Hobbes gives and which is later on taken up by Vico, this point.

**Student:** Well, does that mean that the status of the materialist teaching in itself is lower than, I mean, the classical materialist teaching?

**LS:** Is more important in modern times.

**Student:** No, I mean is it—if for Hobbes, does that mean that the status of the materialist premises are less important?

**LS:** No, they are very important, but their status is very ambiguous. One does not know, Hobbes talks most of the time as if this were the most evident thing in the world, that only bodies are. And then on the other hand, he, in more precise statements, it appears that body, “quote body, unquote,” is a construct of the human mind. This difficulty Hobbes has never solved. But there was no such difficulty for the ancient materialists. So the physical teaching has profoundly changed and this is probably connected with the profound changes regarding both the status and the content of politics. Yes?

**Student:** I mean, one could tie together some of these things, I think, if one thinks of the definition of nature, or what Kant wanted to . . . place as reason prescribing to nature its laws—

**LS:** Ya.

**Student:** rather than finding out what are the laws that govern all things, so that—

**LS:** Ya, but this nature is not the true nature. Ya. I mean, that is phenomenal nature.

**Student:** Yeah, and the most fundamental laws are things that are, can be spoken of as almost as products of—

**LS:** Ya, ya.

**Student:** . . . human making

**LS:** Yes.

**Student:** Yeah, just as the political order is a product of human making.

**LS:** Yes, ya.

**Student:** In other words, reason is legislative or productive rather than intuitive for Kant, and I think that would cover both theoretical and practical reason.

**LS:** Ya, and this way they are assimilated towards each other. Now, is there any other point you would like to take up? Then let us return to our text. We began to read last time Socrates' conversation with his son Lamprocles, about Lamprocles' mother whose name is of course never mentioned here. And the argument hitherto we have studied is that ingratitude is one of the worst kinds of injustice, and ingratitude to parents is the worst of ingratitude. And then he speaks of what children owe to their parents and we have heard first of the father, and now we turn to the passage where he speaks of the mother: the child owes much more to the mother than to the father. Do you have that passage? In paragraph five of the second chapter. Ya?

**Reader:** "The woman conceives and bears her burden in travail, risking her life, and giving of her own food; and, with much labour, having endured to the end and brought forth her child, she rears and cares for it, although she has not received any good thing, and the babe neither recognises its benefactress nor can make its wants known to her: still she guesses what is good for it and what it likes, and seeks to supply these things, and rears it for a long season, enduring toil day and night, knowing nothing what return she will get." (II.2.5)

**LS:** Yes, let us stop please. So <sup>5</sup>the mother does much more than the father for the child, and therefore Lamprocles is particularly obliged to his mother rather than father. Otherwise, if the mother—if he did not have a greater obligation to his mother, he might say: Why are you so gentle? Whereas the mother, his mother, is so ungentle. And so Socrates gives a reason for that.

**Reader:** "Nor are the parents content just to supply food, but as soon as their children seem capable of learning they teach them what they can for their good, and if they think that another is more competent to teach them anything, they send them to him at a cost, and strive their utmost that the children may turn out as well as possible." (II.2.6)

**LS:** Yes. Now, what do you say to this argument? Is this universally true, that parents do that? I believe poor people are not able to give an education of this kind to their children, and of course how much Socrates and his wife could spend for this purpose is a moot question, since Socrates, as he always stresses, is so poor. Yes?

**Reader:**

"To this the young man replied:

'Nay, but even if she has done all this and far more than this, no one could put up with her vile temper.'



“‘Which, think you,’ asked Socrates, ‘is the harder to bear, a wild beast's brutality or a mother's?’” (II.2.6-7)

**LS:** Ya, now you see that Socrates strengthens the objection, as one could say, <sup>6</sup>by replacing vile temper by brutality or whatever the most convenient translation might be. Yes.

**Reader:**

“I should say a mother’s, when she is like mine.”

“Well now, many people get bitten or kicked by wild beasts; has she ever done you an injury of that sort?” (II.2.7)

**LS:** So Socrates takes it very literally. [Laughter] Yes.

**Reader:**

“No, by Zeus, but she says things one wouldn't listen to for anything in the world.”

“Well, how much trouble do you think you have given her by your peevish words and forward acts day and night since you were a little child; and how much pain when you were ill?”

“But I have never yet said or done anything to cause her shame.”

“Now do you really think it harder for you to listen to what she says than for actors when they abuse one another in a tragedy?”

“But an actor, I suppose, doesn't think that a question put to him will lead to punishment, or that a threat means any harm: and so he makes light of it.”

“And why should you be annoyed? You know well that there is no malice in what your mother says to you; on the contrary, she wishes you to be blessed above all other beings—unless, indeed, you suppose that your mother is maliciously set against you?”

“Oh no, I don't think that.” (II.2.8-9)

**LS:** So now you see here the argument with the tragedians, what Socrates says is this: you hear the tragic actors calling each other the most terrible things, and Lamprocles says: Ya, but they don't mean it. And Socrates: Does your mother mean it? The ambiguity of meaning, the word meaning, conceals the difference in the difficult situation. Ya.

**Reader:** Then Socrates exclaimed:

“So this mother of yours is kindly disposed towards you; she nurses you devotedly in sickness and sees that you want for nothing; more than that, she prays the gods to bless you abundantly and pays vows on your behalf; and yet you say she is a trial! It seems to me that, if you can't endure a mother like her, you can't endure a good thing.” (II.2.9-10)

**LS:** Yes. Now, here the point: she is favorably disposed, well-meaning to you; that Lamprocles has granted. Now, what is the significance of well-meaning, of benevolence, according to Socrates? We have read this before; we can have another look at it, in chapter two, paragraph 51. Do you have that? Chapter two, paragraph 51.

**Reader:** “But,” said his accuser, “Socrates caused his companions to dishonour not only their fathers, but their other relations as well, by saying that invalids and litigants get benefit not from

their relations, but from their doctor or their counsel. Of friends too he said that their goodwill was worthless, unless they could combine with it some power to help one: only those deserved honour who knew what was the right thing to do, and could explain it. Thus by leading the young to think that he excelled in wisdom and in ability to make others wise, he had such an effect on his companions that no one counted for anything in their estimation in comparison with him.” (I.2.51-52)

**LS:** And then Xenophon says [that] Socrates did say these things. So good will is not enough. You must also have competence, whether you call it sense, must also be sensible, in addition. So Socrates doesn't say that Xanthippe is sensible, <sup>7</sup>there is no basis for that. But he says the good will, and she prays; so he replaces, as it were, her good will by her praying. We remember Socrates' view of prayer. We have read this in chapter three, we do not have to read this again. Yes?

**Reader:**

“Now tell me, is there any other being whom you feel bound to regard? Or are you set on trying to please nobody, and obeying neither general nor other ruler?”

“By Zeus, of course not!”

“Do you want to please your neighbour, for instance, so that he may kindle a fire for you at your need, may support you in prosperity, and in case of accident or failure may be ready to hold out a helping hand?”

“Yes, I do.”

**LS:** The word used here is again good, benevolence, good will, that has, helps you with good will, the spirit of good will.

**Reader:** “When you find yourself with a travelling companion on land or at sea, or happen to meet anyone, is it a matter of indifference to you whether he prove a friend or an enemy? Or do you think his goodwill worth cultivating?”

“Yes, I do.” (II.2.11-12)

**LS:** Ya. So Lamprocles sees that, but what is the relevance of this remark here? His mother has good will to him. Why should he still try to gain it? Well, in a way, it was of course lost, and he has to regain it. This is a slight contradiction to what went before. Yes?

**Reader:** “And yet, when you are resolved to cultivate these, you don't think courtesy is due to your mother, who loves you more than all? Don't you know that even the state ignores all other forms of ingratitude and pronounces no judgment on them, caring nothing if the recipient of a favour neglects to thank his benefactor, but inflicts penalties on the man who is discourteous to his parents and rejects him as unworthy of office, holding that it would be a sin for him to offer sacrifices on behalf of the state and that he is unlikely to do anything else honourable<sup>viii</sup> and rightly.”

**LS:** Is unlikely to have done anything nobly and justly. Yes?

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<sup>viii</sup> Strauss corrects to “honourably”

**Reader:** “And by Zeus, if one fail to honour his parents' graves, the state inquires into that too—” (II.2.13)

**LS:** Yes. This, by the admission to election to political office. Now <sup>8</sup>this is, as it were, final proof of the importance of gratitude to parents. Yes?

**Reader:** “Therefore, my boy, if you are prudent, you will pray the gods to pardon your neglect of your mother, lest they in turn refuse to be kind to you, thinking you an ingrate; and you will beware of men, lest all cast you out, perceiving that you care nothing for your parents, and in the end you are found to be without a friend. For, should men suppose you to be ungrateful to your parents—”

**LS:** “Men” is an addition of Marchant.

**Reader:** “Should they suppose?”

**LS:** “For if they.” It may also refer to the gods of whom you spoke of.

**Reader:** “For if they suppose you to be ungrateful to your parents, none would think you would be grateful for any kindness he might show you.” (II.2.14)

**LS:** So in other words, the conduct of the gods and the men, men, is exactly alike: both dislike the ungrateful because they expect the ungrateful one will be ungrateful to them. And this calculating consideration determines this latter part of the argument entirely. Now—yes?

**Student:** What is the reason that the city punishes only this particular form of ingratitude. Why is this particular form of ingratitude so repugnant to the city?

**LS:** Well, apparently, why does the city make ingratitude to the parents, <sup>9</sup>as it were, [such] a felony, whereas other forms of ingratitude are not paid any attention to by the *polis*, by the city? Why? Apparently the city thinks respect for parents is something which must be supported by the city to the highest degree. I mean, what is so difficult to understand in that point?

**Student:** Well, I was just—I can't see very clearly, I mean, I have the sense that cities do do that.

**LS:** Huh?

**Student:** [Louder] I have a sense that cities do that, but I don't quite see what the reason for it is. I mean, if ingratitude is bad and is regarded as such by the city in general, what it is about this particular kind that—

**LS:** Yes. Well, in other words, why are there no laws punishing ingratitude in general? Well, think it out for yourself.

**Student:** Well, it would be difficult to punish people for not thanking each other for gifts they have given each other, but does the city have some particular—I mean, does it gain anything in particular by the gratitude children show to their parents?

**LS:** Ya, why is ingratitude in general not a punishable offense? Yes?

**Student:** Well, the . . . one would see this would seem to be some connection between gratitude to parents and patriotism.

**LS:** Ya, but there is not, this is not—

**Student:** Yeah, it is not mentioned here.

**LS:** No, but I think we have to address first the question why ingratitude is not a punishable offense, not there nor in our time, and I suppose never anywhere, as far as I know. Because ingratitude—there would no longer be gratitude and ingratitude; if ingratitude becomes a punishable offense, then you pay back what you were given just as you pay back a loan. But gratitude presupposes this voluntariness without which it wouldn't be gratitude. But in the case of the parents, the *polis* does not need it because here, the *polis* is not interested in the beauty of gratitude, of an unenforced gratitude. But what is at stake is much too serious: the respect for the parents, for the ancestors, for the whole past, for the *polis*. And you see he mentions also the concern for the graves of the parents, which leads <sup>10</sup>back to the past.

**Student (probably Mr. Klein):** So the *polis* is also a second parent.

**LS:** Pardon?

**Mr. Klein:** The *polis* is a second parent.

**LS:** Ya, in a way, even the first, because it stands for the whole series of ancestors.

**Student:** But isn't there a difference between the reason given here of not being, for men being rejected if he's, has no gratitude, is because he wouldn't be—it would be a sin for him to offer sacrifices on behalf of the state, but today the men that run the state don't offer sacrifices on behalf of the state.

**LS:** Oh if <sup>11</sup>they have been appointed for this function, sure. I mean, the *polis* as *polis* cannot sacrifice, the *polis* must always appoint someone or some men to bring the sacrifices.

**Student:** In classical antiquity, it's my understanding that there were certain men who were appointed to make sacrifices on behalf of the state, and in the United States I don't see any who are doing the same thing, so this indicates that there is some kind of difference, and that if this is the reason— [LS talking over]

**LS:** Ya, sure. First Amendment, First Amendment.

**Student:** First Amendment.

**LS:** Yes, there was no First Amendment there.

**Student:** All right, but if this is the reason now that's being offered, <sup>12</sup>it would be that a man who is discourteous to his parents is unworthy of office because it would be a sin for him to offer sacrifices on behalf of the state, then that's no more true today. Is that right? Or maybe we still have some sacrifices.

**LS:** Ya. I do not know. I mean, that is, today that is true. Everything, of course, is right today, everything is in a state of disintegration. Many things which were taken for granted at all times are no longer taken for granted. But when you look at certain things—for example, divorce was frowned upon in former times. I mean, not necessarily regarded, not necessarily forbidden, but frowned upon. And you know, when Governor Rockefeller ran for governorship in the State of New York, that was a great question: How important will this be against his election?

**Student:** That is, his relation with the gods makes a difference with respect to his relation to the people.

**LS:** No, no. <sup>13</sup>Well, you do not have an immediate parallel, but I wonder if a man running for office, for high office, as an atheist would not damage his prospects fatally today. You do not find a law in modern times, and especially in this country, but you have to use more flexible criteria.

**Student:** These things are still there, then, even now?

**LS:** Ya. Yes, they are, they partly survive, they partly survive. Ya?

**Student:** I wonder what it might say about the politics today that in a way encourage ingratitude to parents and the family as if it were a kind of competitor to loyalty to the political order. I mean, to a certain extent—well, I mean, one can think of the kibbutzim in Israel, but one can also think of communist societies, and it may be connected somehow with the idea of the welfare state altogether. You know, get the children out of the hands of the parents as quickly as possible, into schools, <sup>14</sup>this seems to be something of a shift in this in modern times.

**LS:** What about Plato's *Republic*?

**Student:** What?

**LS:** What about Plato's *Republic*? [Laughter]

**Student:** The same thing, yeah.

**LS:** So the problem existed already there, in other words, and based in Plato, surely, on this very question to which Socrates alludes, the question of the competence of the parents: Are the parents the most competent educators? This is the question which one must raise. And one can

say, of course, they have the great—pray that they have an affection, which other people do not have, but this is only a legal presumption. Not valid in all cases, and so a long subject, surely. But this was not Socrates' business. He was confronted with a practical question, namely, with Lamprocles' rebellion against Xanthippe, and he had to show him that this must be stopped. And he says he did as well as he could. If you can improve on Socrates' argument against Lamprocles, let us hear it, but you must not replace Lamprocles by an American boy in our age. We do not know what Socrates would have said to him. <sup>15</sup>There would probably not have been any occasion for Socrates to talk to him, ya? Now in all these cases here one must consider not only what Xenophon says or reports, but also what he does not report. Now we have seen in the passage <sup>16</sup>from the second chapter, which we read just now again, that Socrates was accused of subverting paternal authority, *paternal* authority. It would be interesting to see Socrates persuading a rebellious son to stop his rebellion against his father. Xenophon does not supply us with this conversation. It would be of some interest. One must also consider the following thing: Lamprocles is angry at his mother, and Socrates is aware of it. The natural thing would be, it seems, to talk to Xanthippe. Why does he not do it? I believe because it would be hopeless. That is a phenomenon, her wild temper is a phenomenon like bad weather. That cannot be influenced by speech. What can be influenced by speech is only the reaction of others to that bad weather. I think that is implied here. So now let us turn to the next chapter. . . . Ya, ya—

**Reader:** “On another occasion he found that two brothers, Chaerophon and Chaerecrates, whom he knew well, were quarrelling. On seeing the latter, he cried, ‘Surely, Chaerecrates, you are not one of those—’” (II.3.1)

**LS:** One second. Now these individuals, Chaerophon and Chaerecrates, we have met in chapter two, paragraph 48, where they are mentioned among the true associates of Socrates; and you know, of course, Chaerophon also from Plato's *Apology*, where he went to Delphi and asked the gods the famous question about Socrates. But here we see that he has a brother, and these two brothers are not on good terms, you know. I think a reference to the brother may be implied in this passage in the beginning of Plato's *Gorgias*, 448b. Now <sup>17</sup>Chaerophon is here and is supposed to ask Polus about Gorgias' art. “If Gorgias were a man of knowledge in the art which his brother, Herodicus, possesses, what would we call his brother? Would we not call him a physician, yes? Now, if he were expert in the same art as Aristophon, son of Aglaophon, or his brother, how would we call him then? Of course, a painter.” Here there are two pairs of brothers of which Chaerophon speaks. Perhaps this has something to do with his fraternal difficulty. But let us see. This is the last chapter on brothers, on relatives. Yes?

**Reader:** “On seeing the latter, he cried, ‘Surely, Chaerecrates, you are not one of those who hold that there is more value in goods and chattels than in a brother, when they are senseless but he is sensible; they are helpless but he is helpful; when, moreover, you have many goods, but only one brother. It is strange too that a man should think he loses by his brothers because he cannot have their possessions as well as his own, and yet should not think that he loses by his fellow-citizens because their possessions are not his; and whereas in this case men can reflect that it is better to belong to a community, secure in the possession of a sufficiency, than to dwell in solitude with a precarious hold on all the property of their fellow-citizens, they fail to see that the same principle applies to brothers.’” (II.3.1-2)

**LS:** Ya, so first here is spoken of the one brother, and then he goes over to *brothers*. There is no reason why men should have only one brother, whereas it is necessary that men has only one father and one mother. I disregard now stepfather and stepmother. Yes?

**Reader:** “Again, those who have the means by servants to relieve them of work, and make friends because they feel the need of help; but they care nothing for their brothers, as though friendship can exist between fellow-citizens, but not between brothers! Yet common parentage and common upbringing are strong ties of affection, for even brute beasts reared together feel a natural yearning for one another. Besides, our fellow-men respect those of us who have brothers more than those who have none, and are less ready to quarrel with them.” (II.3.3-4)

**LS:** So in other words, the previous argument would compel one to wonder what is the advantage of brothers beyond fellow citizens, and here the answer is given: there is one ingredient in it which man shares with the beasts, namely, [being] common offspring, that is, of brothers and causes affection or nearness. And the second is that other people honor more those who have brothers than the brotherless ones. Yes?

**Reader:**

“If only the difference between us were a slight one, Socrates,” replied Chaerecrates, “it might perhaps be my duty to put up with my brother and not allow trifles to separate us. For a brother who behaves like a brother is, as you say, a blessing; but if his conduct is nothing like that, and is, in fact, just the opposite of what it should be, what is the use of attempting impossibilities?”

“Does everyone find Chaerophon as disagreeable as you do, Chaerecrates—” (II.3.5-6)

**LS:** Ya. Now, let us—so Chaerophon is difficult here. He shares this quality with Xanthippe. Xanthippe was also difficult; in Greek it was the same word, yes. But now the argument turns differently now. Yes?

**Reader:**

“Does everyone find Chaerophon as disagreeable as you do, Chaerecrates, or do some people think him very pleasant?”

“God, Socrates,”<sup>ix</sup> replied he, “this is precisely my reason for hating him: he is pleasant enough to other people, but whenever he is near me, he invariably says and does more to hurt than to help me.”

“Well now,” said Socrates, “if you try to manage a horse without knowing the right way, he hurts you. Is it so with a brother? Does he hurt if you try to deal with him when you don't know the way?”

“What,” exclaimed Chaerecrates, “don't I know how to deal with a brother, when I know how to requite a kind word and a generous deed? But I can't speak or act kindly to one who tries to annoy me by his words and actions—and what's more, I won't try.”

“Chaerecrates, you astonish me! Had you a sheep dog that was friendly to the shepherds, but growled when you came near him, it would never occur to you to get angry, but you would try to tame him by kindness. You say that, if your brother treated you like a

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<sup>ix</sup> In translation: “Ah, Socrates”

brother, he would be a great blessing, and you confess that you know how to speak and act kindly: yet you don't set yourself to contriving that he shall be the greatest possible blessing to you." (II.3.6-9)

**LS:** So Chaerophon is difficult, but he is not difficult to all men. And then the question is: well, maybe Chaerecrates is unable to *handle* difficult men, to appease them. And Socrates gives the example of the dog. The same dog may be very nice to some people and very nasty to others, and then those to whom it's nasty must have the art of appeasing dogs. The same would apply to human beings. Chaerecrates says he has the art, he possesses that art. Ya?

**Reader:**

"I fear, Socrates, that I lack the wisdom to make Chaerophon treat me as he should."

"And yet," said Socrates, "there is no need, so far as I see, of any subtle or strange contriving on your part: I think you know the way to win him and to get his good opinion."

"If you have observed that I know some spell without being conscious of my knowledge, pray tell me at once."

"Then tell me, now; if you wanted to get an invitation to dine with an acquaintance when he offers sacrifice, what would you do?"

"Of course I should begin by inviting him myself when I offered sacrifice."

"And suppose you wanted to encourage one of your friends to look after your affairs during your absence from home, what would you do?"

"Of course I should first undertake to look after his affairs in his absence."

"And suppose you wanted a stranger to entertain you when you visited his city, what would you do?"

"Obviously I should first entertain him when he came to Athens. Yes, and if I wanted him to show himself eager in forwarding the business on which I had come, it is obvious that I should first have to do the same by him."

"It seems that you have long concealed a knowledge of all spells that were ever discovered." (II.3.10-14)

**LS:** So in other words, what Socrates suggests here is [that] the art of handling a brother is in no way different from that handling any other human beings, ya? There is nothing peculiar to that. Therefore he takes the example, of course, of acquaintances, and a brother is necessarily an acquaintance. Yes? Now he knows all the charms. Yes?

**Reader:**

"Or is it that you hesitate to make a beginning, for fear of disgracing yourself by first showing kindness to your brother? Yet it is generally thought worthy of the highest praise to anticipate the malevolence of an enemy and the benevolence of a friend. So if I thought Chaerophon more capable than you of showing the way to this friendship, I would try to persuade him to take the first step towards an understanding with you. But as things are, I think the enterprise more likely to succeed under your direction."

"Strange sentiments—" (II.3.14)

**LS:** Ya, under your guidance. If you lead. Yes?



**Reader:** ““Strange sentiments, these, Socrates! It's quite unlike you to urge me, the junior, to lead the way! And surely all hold the contrary opinion, that the senior, I mean, should always act and speak first?”” (II.3.14-15)

**LS:** So Chaerecrates knows that Socrates follows, is in the habit of following custom. And therefore he says: You strangely ask me to deviate from custom and to approach my brother first although I am the younger. The older brother comes first and takes, will hence take the first step. But [Chaerophon]<sup>18</sup> hasn't done that. Ya?

**Reader:** ““How so?” said Socrates. ‘Is it not the general opinion that a young man should make way for an older when they meet, offer his seat to him, give him a comfortable bed, let him have the first word? My good friend, don't hesitate, but take up the task of pacifying your man, and in no time he will respond to your overtures.’” (II.3.16)

**LS:** Yes, let us stop here for one moment. So Socrates has here found the solution: precisely custom commands that the younger brother should be more obliging to the *older* brother, and therefore it is perfectly alright that Chaerecrates takes the first step. Now there was here, in this conversation—the question could be raised: Why does Socrates not talk to the difficult man—in this case Chaerophon—in order to bring about a reconciliation? In the case of the conversation with Lamprocles, the question, why did Socrates not talk to Xanthippe could not with propriety be raised, because Socrates [would have]<sup>19</sup> been forced to say then: What I tell her doesn't have the slightest influence on her. That would increase Lamprocles' anger and be still more difficult for domestic peace, and therefore—but here the question can be raised conveniently and with propriety, and therefore it is answered and given a correct, conventional answer.

**Reader:**

“Don't you see how keen and frank he is? Low fellows, it is true, yield most readily to gifts, but kindness is the weapon most likely to prevail with a gentleman.”

“And what,” asked Chaerecrates, “if all my efforts lead to no improvement?”

“Well, in that case, I presume you will have shown that you are honest and brotherly, he that he is base and unworthy of kindness. But I am confident that no such result will follow; for I think that, as soon as he is aware of your challenge to this contest, he will be all eagerness to outdo your kind words and actions. What if a pair of hands refused the office of mutual help for which God made them, and tried to thwart each other; or if a pair of feet neglected the duty of working together, for which they were fashioned, and took to hampering each other? That is how you two are behaving at present. Would it not be utterly senseless and disastrous to use for hindrance instruments that were made for help? And, moreover, a pair of brothers, in my judgment, were made by God to render better service one to the other than a pair of hands and feet and eyes and all the instruments that he meant to be used as fellows. For the hands cannot deal simultaneously with things that are more than six feet or so apart: the feet cannot reach in a single stride things that are even six feet apart: and the eyes, though they seem to have a longer range, cannot at the same moment see things still nearer than that, if some are in front and some behind. But two brothers, when they are friends, act simultaneously for mutual benefit, however far parted one from the other.” (II.3.16-19)

**LS:** Yes. You see, Socrates assigns here the same status to the *pair* of brothers as to the pair of eyes, ears, and hands. And this is all right, since in this particular case there [are]<sup>20</sup> only two brothers, but the impression which he creates is as if it were as natural <sup>21</sup>for men to have a single brother, no more and no less, as it is natural for men to have two eyes, not more and no less. But this fulfills its rhetorical function here, and we shall see later on, we hope, in the next chapter this theme is used for another purpose. So this is the whole discussion, one can say, of Socrates' conduct towards relatives insofar as his conversation with his son, of course, shows his own conduct. But the two chapters taken together deal with what Socrates did in order to encourage people to conduct themselves well towards one another.

Now we come to a new section. At the beginning of the next chapter, Xenophon says very emphatically, "I heard once him conversing about friends too." So Xenophon vouches here for the authenticity of the report. There was no such vouching in the section on relatives. Furthermore, this section on friends which goes up to the end of Book 2 is subdivided. First there are three general chapters, chapters dealing with friendship generally, and then there begins a new subject in chapter seven, which deals with how *Socrates* helped his friends; these are four chapters. Socrates' conduct toward his friends. There is no such subdivision in the section on relatives. <sup>22</sup>The section on friends is much more detailed than the section on relatives, because this was a much more important subject for Socrates than relatives.

The section following, beginning at the beginning of Book 3, deals with those who strive for the noble things, which means for political office. Now this implies, this *plan* implies that the friends are one class and those striving for political office are another class. Friends are not striving for political office. This agrees with what we have read in chapter two of the First Book, paragraph 48. In the section on people striving for political office there is no general exhortation to people to strive for political office. This is in agreement with what I said before. Now, should we read?

**Reader:** "Again, I once heard him give a discourse on friendship that was likely, as I thought, to help greatly in the acquisition and use of friends.

For he said that he often heard it stated that of all possessions the most precious is a good and sincere friend. 'And yet,' he said, 'there is no transaction most men are so careless about as the acquisition of friends.''" (II.4.1)

**LS:** Ya, here in the text there is clear opposition of what he *hears*—namely, that friendship is highly praised—and of what he *sees*, namely, the neglect of the acquisition of friends. Yes?

**Reader:** "For I find that they are careful about getting houses and lands and slaves and cattle and furniture, and anxious to keep what they have; but though they tell one that a friend is the greatest blessing, I find that most men take no thought how to get new friends—" (II.4.2)

**LS:** Ya, <sup>23</sup>he *saw* again some. Ya?

**Reader:** "that most men take no thought how to get new friends or how to keep their old ones. Indeed, if one of their friends and one of their servants fall ill at the same time, I find that some call in the doctor to attend the servant—" (II.4.2)

**LS:** Ya, what he says by “find” is all the time “he saw.” Ya? I mention, it <sup>24</sup>goes through this chapter up to a certain point.

**Reader:** “I see that some call in the doctor to attend the servant and are careful to provide everything that may contribute to his recovery, whereas they take no heed of the friend. In the event of both dying, they are vexed at losing the servant, but don't feel that the death of the friend matters in the least. And though none of their other possessions is uncared for and unconsidered, they are deaf to their friends' need of attention.” (II.4.2)

**LS:** So in other words, <sup>25</sup>they are more concerned with their slaves than their friends because slaves are property. And remember, in general [in] the countryside there was a kind of peasant's proverb about the difference between the death of the wife and the death of the horse. That was of course at the time when there was not insurance in the way in which it exists now. Now the death of the wife was regarded as a minor inconvenience because <sup>26</sup>the peasant could buy—not buy, but could marry another one and increase his wealth. But a horse, the loss of a horse was a near, a complete loss. Yes?

**Reader:** “And besides all this, I find that most men [corrects himself: “I see that most men”] know the number of their other possessions, however great it may be, yet cannot tell the number of their friends, few as they are; and, if they are asked and try to make a list, they will insert names and presently remove them. So much for the thought they give to their friends!” (II.4.4)

**LS:** So in other words, there is not such a survey. He can say this piece of land and this piece of house and so on, this house, these are my possessions. But when he enumerates his friends then he says: Oh ya, is he a friend or is he not? He hesitates. And that is the first allusion to the ambiguity of what friend means. Yes?

**Reader:** “So much for the thought they give to their friends! Yet surely there is no other possession that can compare with a good friend. For what horse, what yoke of oxen is so good a servant as the good friend? What slave so loyal and constant? Or what possession so serviceable? The good friend is on the watch to supply whatever his friend wants for building up his private fortune and forwarding his public career. If generosity is called for, he does his part: if fear harasses, he comes to the rescue, shares expenses, helps to persuade, bears down opposition: he is foremost in delighting him when he is prosperous and raising him up when he falls. Of all that a man can do with his hands, see for himself with his eyes, hear for himself with his ears or accomplish with his feet, in nothing is a friend backward in helping. Nevertheless, while some strive to cultivate a tree for its fruit, most bestow but an idle and listless care on their most fruitful possession, the name of which is ‘friend.’” (II.4.4-7)

**LS:** Ya, so then an extremely *useful* possession. This economical and calculating consideration goes through these two chapters, to some extent already through the preceding chapter. Now here this cannot—is not brought <sup>27</sup>out in the translation. Oh, it was, I remember. The last paragraph reminds us of the last paragraph of the preceding chapter. There he had already used the comparison with the *paired* parts of the body—hands, eyes, and so on—but there, <sup>28</sup>at the end of chapter three, he had used the dual, which one uses only <sup>29</sup>if there are only *two* things in

question, of the thing in question. Here he uses the plural. He uses the plural. So in other words, there may be—while the previous statement implied you can have only one brother, now it is implied you can have many brothers, plural. But, as appears from the end of this chapter, one has only one friend. Read this again, “what the hands—”

**Reader:** “Of all that a man can do with his hands, see for himself with his eyes, hear for himself with his ears or accomplish with his feet, in nothing is a friend backward in helping. Nevertheless, while some strive to cultivate a tree for its fruit, most bestow but an idle and listless care on their most fruitful possession, the name of which is ‘friend.’” (II.4.7)

**LS:** Yes, so the singular is here. But the dual is here avoided, nevertheless it is still effective. And it might suggest that friends are—in the case of brothers it is not *normal* that they are two; in the case of friends it is *normal* that they are two. This thought is beautifully developed by Aristotle in his *Ethics*. He says there are not many friends according to the friendship of companions, distinguished from the friendship of relatives or others. And those who are praised—the friendships which are praised in hymns—speak of two friends, meaning Achilles, Patroclus; Orestes, Pylades; and from the Bible, David and Jonathan. Now if anything of this were true, it would of course say that there is only one friend of Socrates. The suggestions of Xenophon, which are very thin, which one cannot press, would make one believe that this friend of Socrates, the sole friend in the most emphatic sense, was Plato. Now let us—ya, we can still read one more chapter. So this is the first statement of friends, which deals with the acquisition and use of friends. Now?

**Reader:** “Again, I once heard him exhort a listener—for so I interpreted his words—to examine himself and to ask how much he was worth to his friends. For he had—”

**LS:** Now here, now this question concerns not the friend to be acquired but oneself as a possible friend. What was the situation?

**Reader:** “For he had noticed that one of his companions was neglecting a poverty-stricken friend; so he put a question to Antisthenes in the presence of several others, including the careless friend.” (II.5.1)

**LS:** That is a perfectly correct translation, but it can as well mean the following thing: he asked Antisthenes in presence of the one who neglected *him*—namely, Antisthenes—and many others.  
<sup>30</sup>And Antisthenes was notoriously poor, so it is perfectly possible that Antisthenes is the one who has suffered from this faithless friend. Yes?

**Reader:** “‘Antisthenes,’ he said, ‘have friends like servants their own values? For one servant, I suppose, may be worth two minas, another less than half a mina, another five minas, another no less than ten. Nicias, son of Niceratus, is said to have given a whole talent for a manager of his silver-mine. So I am led to inquire whether friends too may not differ in value.’” (II.5.2)

**LS:** Ya. Now let us see. So that’s clear. There is a value or price of friends just as there is of slaves. Now there are five figures mentioned—two minas, yes, in the middle is five minas, and that happens to be the worth of Socrates, the monetary worth of Socrates. Ya?

**Reader:** “‘Oh yes,’ replied Antisthenes, ‘there are men whose friendship I, at any rate, would rather have than two minas: others I should value at less than half a mina: others I would prefer to ten minas: others I would sacrifice any sum and take any trouble to have among my friends.’ ‘Then if that is so,’ said Socrates, ‘were it not well that one should ask himself how much he is really worth to his friends, and try to make himself as precious as possible, in order that his friends may not be tempted to betray him? For my part, I often hear complaints of this sort: “A friend betrayed me,” “one whom I regarded as my friend gave me up for the sake of a mina.” I think over such matters and reflect that when a man sells a bad slave he takes anything he can get for him; and perhaps it is tempting to sell a bad friend when there is a chance of getting more than he is worth. Good servants, I find, are not offered for sale, nor are good friends betrayed.’” (II.5.3-5)

**LS:** Ya, that is the whole story. That is of some, a certain difficulty. In order to be betrayed as a worthless friend, as a worthless slave is sold—<sup>31</sup>oh, *not* to be betrayed, one must make oneself as valuable as one can. Good slaves are not sold, good friends are not betrayed. Now this seems to be a warning addressed to a neglectful companion, that he should cease to neglect Antisthenes. It seems to be an attempt to correct the neglectful companion. But in fact it justifies him. When people neglect or betray a friend, then it shows he wasn’t worth it, because valuable friends are not betrayed. The question would be whether Antisthenes, who plays a great role (he is a so-called founder of the Cynic School) and whether he was, was he not perhaps not a good friend, in contrast to Plato? Well, this is—we cannot decide, but we can raise this question. This low view of friendship is stated not only in Socrates’ speaking to acquaintances, for Chaerophon and Chaerecrates were called acquaintances, but also when he talks to companions, as the two people whom he mentions here in chapter five. So <sup>32</sup>from this point of view we can say the companions, [who] are at a higher level than the acquaintances, consist of a great variety of human beings, high and low. That is the least we can and what we must say. Now there follows the next chapter, that is much too long to begin to read. That is the conversation with the same Critobolus of whom we got an inkling in the *Oeconomicus*, the same one. And here the calculating considerations are not in the foreground. One could say here the subject is precisely friendship among gentlemen. Not, in other words, not something like slaves of whom we have spoken hitherto.

**Student:** You suggested a little before, this distinction between friends and those who seek political office. Let me try to follow up a bit. It’s not clear, I couldn’t get it clear whether Xenophon suggests or not that this is only the case of Socrates’ friends or that a universal, this is a universal case, that political men can’t be true friends. Or does this only apply to—

**LS:** Ya, that question will be discussed in the next chapter. In a way, one can give an answer already on the basis of what we already have read and know. Granted that Xenophon makes these observations primarily with a view to Socrates and his circle, this implies something for all human beings, you know? There, Socrates has a variety of *kinds* of friends. We must try to understand what kinds of friends there are. Some are mere acquaintances whom he knew from childhood on, and towards whom he was well disposed, and with whom he had nothing else in common, and others with whom he had shared the most important things. Now, if we take this as a [schema]<sup>33</sup>, there are very many things in between. With others, he can have shared very

important things but not the most important things. Does this not make sense? And <sup>34</sup>therefore, <sup>35</sup>if the political life is not the highest life, then a political friendship, friendship with political men, could not be the highest friendship—to say nothing of other difficulties there, because if certain offices cannot be held by two people, and therefore there must be competition for that office, and however generous and noble they may be, the demands are perhaps too high. But what Socrates says about what he is doing with his best friends—his most blessed activity—there is no competition then. So now we will leave the rest—

[end of tape]

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<sup>1</sup> Deleted “who”

<sup>2</sup> Deleted “is”

<sup>3</sup> Deleted “of whether”

<sup>4</sup> Deleted “it would”

<sup>5</sup> Deleted “this”

<sup>6</sup> Deleted “objection”

<sup>7</sup> Deleted “says that”

<sup>8</sup> Deleted “this is so”

<sup>9</sup> Deleted “such a”

<sup>10</sup> Deleted “to this”

<sup>11</sup> Deleted “they are”

<sup>12</sup> Deleted “that”

<sup>13</sup> Deleted “we have to, we do not have”

<sup>14</sup> Deleted “and there seems to be”

<sup>15</sup> Deleted “he would probably”

<sup>16</sup> Deleted “which we”

<sup>17</sup> Deleted “Socrates”

<sup>18</sup> Deleted “Socrates”

<sup>19</sup> Deleted “had”

<sup>20</sup> Deleted “is”

<sup>21</sup> Deleted “for a brother to have”

<sup>22</sup> Deleted “this is”

<sup>23</sup> Deleted “he thought”

<sup>24</sup> Deleted “comes that is”

<sup>25</sup> Deleted “they treat their slaves”

<sup>26</sup> Deleted “he could”

<sup>27</sup> Deleted “out in, cannot, is not brought”

<sup>28</sup> Deleted “in”

<sup>29</sup> Deleted “if there is no”

<sup>30</sup> Deleted “so the”

<sup>31</sup> Deleted “one must make one”

<sup>32</sup> Deleted “if we take”

<sup>33</sup> Deleted “scholar”

<sup>34</sup> Deleted “would”

<sup>35</sup> Deleted “so”

## Session 14: no date

**Leo Strauss:** So let us then begin. Now we began last time to read the section on *friends*, and that section is subdivided into, first, general exhortations regarding friendship; and then, conversations showing Socrates' conduct towards his friends. I'll repeat that the next section, which deals with those desirous for the noble things, the men of political ambition, does not have such a subdivision because, while Socrates has friends and is engaged in friendship, he does not desire the noble things and is not engaged in that quest. Now the two chapters on friendship, which we read last time, deal with the friend as a possession. It is made clear that a friend is by far superior as a possession to a slave, but this precisely means that the friend is judged by the same standard as the slave. The friend is viewed from the point of view of the useful as distinguished from the noble. But, although this is a rather low discussion of friendship, there are some pointers there to the very highest kind of friendship, but they are almost invisible.

Now in chapter six, the subject is friendship among perfect gentleman, i.e., a subject much higher than that manifestly discussed in the two preceding chapters. Now in reading that, we must not forget the confrontation of Socrates with a perfect gentleman in the central chapter, chapter 11, of the *Oeconomicus*. This confrontation has no parallel in Xenophon, surely not in the *Memorabilia*, and <sup>1</sup>as far as I can see it also has no parallel in Plato<sup>2</sup>—the confrontation of Socrates with the sophist, of course, or with the youth, promising or not promising—but with the gentleman, so that the conversation amounts to a confrontation, to a manifest confrontation of Socrates with the gentleman, that is another matter. *Implicitly*, yes; for example, in the *Laches*, as Socrates talks to Nicias and Laches on courage, on manliness, and Nicias and Laches are gentlemen, and if you consider these things, then you see that in fact Socrates is confronted with Nicias and Laches, different kinds of gentlemen. But that is not the theme, the explicit theme; the explicit theme is courage. And as far as I remember, there is nowhere else such a confrontation. Perhaps Cephalus, in the First Book of the *Republic*, but there is also not an explicit confrontation between Cephalus' way of life and Socrates' way of life, although the facts mentioned by Cephalus about his way of life enable us to make such a confrontation. But that is not the theme of the discussion. Now let us read the very beginning of the sixth chapter, only the first sentence.

**Reader:** “In the following conversation I thought he gave instruction for testing the qualities that make a man's friendship worth winning.” (II.6.1)

**LS:** What <sup>3</sup>is not brought out here in the translation is that Xenophon's report of this conversation is not literal, but he said “such like things.” At the beginning of chapters four and five, Xenophon had said: “I have heard him say.” So he was present. And he made, he gave no qualification as “such like.” In other words, in chapters four and five, he vouches for the authenticity of the conversation, and he does it even with special emphasis by saying, “I have heard him say,” what Xenophon does not say elsewhere. So here <sup>4</sup>this *claim* to authenticity is not so strong. Yes?

**Reader:** ““Tell me, Critobulus,” he said—”

**LS:** Let us stop here at once. Critobulus <sup>5</sup>you'll remember from the *Oeconomicus*, and also from the conversation with, about Critobulus, and in the presence of Critobulus, with Xenophon in the third chapter of the First Book. Now in this chapter, it is not even certain that Xenophon was present at the conversation, whereas in the two preceding chapters, "I heard this conversation" implies that he was present. But Xenophon was present when the very highest kind of friendship was explicitly discussed, Book One, chapter six, where Socrates speaks of his blissful activity. He mentions that <sup>6</sup>he was present while this statement was made, and he was also present when the low kinds of friendship were discussed in the two preceding chapters here. These facts make us wonder whether there is not a connection between the theme friend and the theme Xenophon, in the form of a question: What kind of a friend was Xenophon? We will then of course not get an explicit answer to this question from Xenophon, but we cannot help raising it. Now let us read the first, the beginning, "tell me Critobulus."

**Reader:** "'if we wanted a good friend, how should we start on the quest? Should we seek first for one who is no slave to eating and drinking, lust, sleep, idleness? For the thrall of these masters cannot do his duty by himself or his friend.'" (II.6.1)

**LS:** Yes. Now this is the well-known theme <sup>7</sup>of which we have heard perhaps *ad nauseum*: continence is the crucial thing. You'll remember that, for example, in the discussion with Aristippus about <sup>8</sup>who is a potential ruler, continence was the theme. The difference, however, is this: that in this case, continence is only the first condition for a potential friend and not the exclusive one and the only one, as we shall see. Yes?

**Reader:**

"No, of course not."

"Then you think we should avoid one who is subject to them?"

"I do, certainly."

"Now what about the spendthrift who is never satisfied, who is always appealing to his neighbours for help, if he receives something, makes no return, if he receives nothing, resents it? Don't you think he too is a troublesome friend?"

"Certainly."

"Then we must avoid him too?"

"We must indeed." (II.6.1-2)

**LS:** You see here that the thought is clear. It, at least it seems to be clear. But it is of an unnecessary explicitness, because <sup>9</sup>why does he still add— <sup>10</sup>after having shown what kind of a man a waster is, why must he still add that one must abstain from trying to get him as a friend? As he says, this is still the same in the case of continence. <sup>11</sup>Later on he will no longer do that, as we will see. Yes?

**Reader:** "'Again, what about the skillful man of business who is eager to make money, and consequently drives a hard bargain, who likes to receive but is disinclined to repay?"

"So far as I see, he is even worse than the last.'" (II.6.3)

**LS:** So in other words, the greedy man is worse than the waster. Does this make sense? The waster is a nicer man than the greedy man. I believe we can understand that. Ya?



**Reader:**

“And what of the man who is such a keen man of business that he has no leisure for anything but the selfish pursuit of gain?”

“We must avoid him too, I think. There is no profit in knowing him.”

“And what of the quarrelsome person who is willing to provide his friends with plenty of enemies?”

“We must shun him too, of course.”

“Suppose that a man is free from all these faults, but stoops to receive kindness with no thought of returning it?”

“There is no profit in him either. But what are the qualities for which we shall try to win a man's friendship, Socrates?” (II.6.4)

**LS:** Now let us first stop here, ya? So the last kind were the quarrelsome and the ingrate. There were altogether six, as we have seen. Why this particular selection is made or whether it's complete is another question. In the immediate sequel we will find a repetition of these negative conditions. Yes?

**Reader:** ““The opposite of these, I suppose. We shall look for one who controls his indulgence in the pleasures of the body, who is truly hospitable and fair in his dealings and eager to do as much for his benefactors as he receives from them, so that he is worth knowing.”” (II.6.4-5)

**LS:** Ya, that is again a summary, <sup>12</sup>but differing from what was said before by the omission of two. Here only four conditions are mentioned. And these are four different conditions, and that means, among other things, that the grateful man, the last item mentioned, may very well be one who is incontinent because these are different conditions. Does this make sense? They are independent of one another. Is this enumeration complete? I do not have in mind anything recondite or something obvious on the basis of what we have read before.

**Student:** Doesn't there have to be a certain equality between the people that are going to be friends, indicated in ways that aren't specified here? Besides just not being quarrelsome—

**LS:** Yes, that is true.

**Student:** There has to be—people have to be in a certain sense equals in order to really be friends.

**LS:** Yes, but <sup>13</sup>the equality was never the theme hitherto.

**Student:** That is left out, I think.

**LS:** Pardon?

**Student:** That is left out. That's mentioned in Aristotle, but not—

**LS:** Oh yes. Well, you cannot expect that Xenophon has the completeness of Aristotle in these matters. But there is one thing which we have already, the subject friendship occurred <sup>14</sup>near the beginning. The accuser had spoken of Socrates' bad remarks about parents, relatives, and so on; and Xenophon, in his reply, adds friends. What were the nasty remarks of Socrates. Let us take the simple case, <sup>15</sup>the first case, the father. Socrates subverted the authority of the father, and the point which he makes is this: the position of the father, an unequal, does not guarantee that he is sensible. More generally stated, applying to both father and other relatives and friends: good will is not enough. Being sensible, being reasonable, is the crucial condition, and that is not mentioned here. It also was not mentioned in the two preceding chapters, but I think we should notice it. The passage which I have in mind is in Book 1, chapter two, paragraphs 52 to 53. Perhaps we'll read it again.

**Reader:** "Of friends too he said that their goodwill was worthless, unless they could combine with it some power to help one: only those deserved honour who knew what was the right thing to do, and could explain it." (I.2.52)

**LS:** Ya, knew—that is, being sensible; and the other, being articulate. And these two things are not mentioned here at all.

**Reader:** "Thus by leading the young to think that he excelled in wisdom and in ability to make others wise, he had such an effect on his companions that no one counted for anything in their estimation in comparison with him." (I.2.52)

**LS:** And so that is, and Xenophon grants that to some extent, ya?

**Student:** Pardon?

**LS:** [Louder] Xenophon *grants* that, grants that to the accuser to some extent. Socrates did say these things. So this is here omitted, <sup>16</sup>we do not know yet why. Now let us go on.

**Reader:** "Now I know that he did use this language about—"

**LS:** No, I'm sorry, go on in chapter six.

**Reader:**

"Then how can we test these qualities, Socrates, before intimacy begins?"

"What test do we apply to a sculptor? We don't judge by what he says, but we look at his statues, and if we see that the works he has already produced are beautiful, we feel confident that his future works will be as good."

"You mean that anyone whose good works wrought upon his old friends are manifest will clearly prove a benefactor to new friends also?"

"Yes; for when I find that an owner of horses has been in the habit of treating his beasts well I think that he will treat others equally well." (II.6.6-7)

**LS:** Ya, there is a certain ambiguity here, because treating the horses well, that is not quite the same thing as benefiting the horse, because the ultimate criterion is the usefulness of the horses

to the owner. But when he speaks of the friends, he seems to have in mind only benefiting, and benefiting is a very ambiguous criterion, because it may mean only do the friend every favor he wants, and that may <sup>17</sup>do him more harm than good. And this limitation to benefitting is connected with the silence on reasonableness. Yes?

**Reader:**

“Granted! but when we have found a man who seems worthy of our friendship, how are we to set about making him our friend?”

“First we should seek guidance from the gods, whether they counsel us to make a friend of him.”

“And next? Supposing that we have chosen and the gods approve him, can you say how is he to be hunted?” (II.6.8)

**LS:** Well, he doesn’t translate it literally, no. He who *seems to* us a potential friend, and the gods do not *oppose*. So <sup>18</sup>Socrates wants positive *counsel* from the gods. Critobulus says the silence of the gods means consent. That <sup>19</sup>is of some importance for the question of the *daimonion*, <sup>20</sup>which according to Plato only prevented, resisted, and never gave positive counsel. So Critobulus is satisfied with this. Yes? Could you?

**Reader:** “By Zeus!”

**LS:** No, no, before. Can you tell us how he should be hunted, yeah? How we should go after him.

**Reader:**

“By Zeus<sup>i</sup> not like a hare by swift pursuit, nor like birds by cunning, nor like enemies by force. It is no light task to capture a friend against his will, and hard to keep him a prisoner like a slave. Hatred, rather than friendship, comes of that treatment.”

“But how does friendship come?”

“There are spells, they say, wherewith those who know charm whom they will and make friends of them, and drugs which those who know give to whom they choose and win their love.”

“How then can we learn them?”

“You have heard from Homer the spell that the Sirens put on Odysseus. It begins like this:”

“‘Hither, come hither, renowned Odysseus, great glory of the Achaeans.’”

“Then did the Sirens chant in this strain for other folk too, Socrates, so as to keep those who were under the spell from leaving them?”

“Not only for those that yearned for the fame—” No, I’m sorry. “No, only for those that yearned for the fame that virtue gives.” (II.6.9-12)

**LS:** Ya, one moment. So here, that’s a quote <sup>21</sup>from the *Odyssey*. There was a reference to Odysseus before the conversation with Xenophon and Critobulus in Book 1, chapter three. But

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<sup>i</sup> In translation: “Surely”

there it was said that Socrates *joked*. It was the story of Circe which Socrates used in a playful manner. Here there is no such suggestion. Socrates says this apparently quite seriously. Yes?

**Reader:**

“You mean, I take it, that the spell must be fitted to the listener, so that he may not take the praise for mockery.”

“Yes; for to praise one for his beauty, his stature and his strength who is conscious that he is short, ugly and puny, is the way to repel him and make him dislike you more.”

“Do you know any other spells?”

“No, but I have heard that Pericles knew many and put them on the city, and so made her love him.”

“And how did Themistocles make the city love him?”

“Not by spells: no, no; but by hanging some good amulet about her.” (II.6.12-13)

**LS:** Ya, we note this in passing, that the Xenophontic Socrates had a much higher regard for Themistocles than for Pericles. Pericles was a spellbinder, and Themistocles gave Athens some serious goods, some true, genuine goods. Regarding the Song of the Sirens, according to Socrates’ free interpretation, the Sirens did not address Odysseus’s companions. And they could not hear what the Sirens sang because they did not strive for virtue. The song of the sirens can be heard only by a small elite, which is not what we see in the *Odyssey*. As for Pericles, you remember the conversation he had with Alcibiades, in the second chapter, which showed already the critical posture of Xenophon toward Pericles. In the next Book, in chapter five of Book 3, we will see a conversation between Socrates and the son of Pericles (who also had the name Pericles), and there it will become clear beyond any doubt that the Xenophontic view was the Socratic view of Pericles. Words and charms, this is the indication of the confrontation of Pericles and Themistocles. Spells and charms are *not* the right way to gain friends. Yes?

**Reader:**

“I think you mean, Socrates, that if we are to win a good man's friendship, we ourselves must be good in word and deed alike?”

“But you imagined that a bad man could win the friendship of honest men?” (II.6.14)

**LS:** Now we come, we approach gradually the crucial center of this conversation. <sup>22</sup>Critobulus remembers Socrates’ thought by saying: If one wants to acquire a good friend, one must become oneself good in *speech and deed*. And Socrates <sup>23</sup>does not note here any disagreement between himself and Critobulus, and he replaces good in speech and deed by good simply. The vulgar man, the man not good in deed and speech, is simply an inferior man. And now Critobulus brings a good reply to that.

**Reader:**

“I did,” answered Critobulus, “for I saw that poor orators have good speakers among their friends, and some who are incapable of commanding an army are intimate with great generals.” (II.6.15)

**LS:** So you see, <sup>24</sup>first he speaks of men good in speaking, the orators. Why should not a man who’s a bad orator be a friend with a good orator? Why should not a man who has no knowledge

whatever of the strategic art be a friend of a general? Because their friendship—they have interests other than their professions, and in these other interests, they may meet. Is this not obvious that Critobulus is right? Or is there any doubt? That is crucial for what follows. Let us read the next sentence.

**Reader:** ““Coming then to the point under discussion, do you know cases of useless persons making useful friends?”” (II.6.16)

**LS:** “The point about which we converse.” So this case of the poor orator being a friend of the good orator, and the poor general or non-general being a friend of the good general, this kind of friendship is not our subject. We have in mind another subject. What this is will gradually become clear. There is a kind of friendship in which the friends may be of very unequal worth, the cases mentioned by Critobulus. This, however, is true of the friendship of Socrates and most if not all his friends. Now, how does he go on here?

**Reader:** ““By Zeus surely not, but if it is impossible that the bad should gain the friendship of gentlemen, then I am anxious to know whether it is quite easy for a gentleman as a matter of course to be the friend of gentlemen?”” (II.6.16)

**LS:** So now the theme is specified. Friendship among gentlemen. The poor orator and the good orator who are to be friends must both be gentlemen. The same applies to the general, any other case. And it applies also to Socrates and his friends. They must—in one way or the other, Socrates must be a gentleman in order to be a friend of gentlemen. But this does not settle the question whether there is not a fundamental difference between the gentlemanship of Socrates and the gentlemanship of most if not all other gentlemen. Critobulus raises the further question: if one has become a gentleman, one will not necessarily be a friend of a gentleman. The mere fact that someone is a gentleman will not make him a friend of gentlemen. He may have some qualities not incompatible with this gentlemanship which do not make him desirable as a friend. For example, he may be a gruff fellow, have other qualities which are compatible with gentlemanship in the wide sense of the term and yet not inviting friendship, to say nothing of the fact that as humans, there are many gentlemen in the world. One cannot possibly be—a gentleman cannot possibly be the friend of all gentlemen. Yes?

**Reader:** ““Your trouble is, Critobulus, that you often find men who do good and shun evil not on friendly terms, but apt to quarrel and treat one another more harshly than worthless fellows.”” (II.6.17)

**LS:** You see, the quarrelsome, they are mentioned in the first enumeration of the qualifications for friendship and were then dropped in the repetition. Here we see the importance of this quality of being *quarrelsome*. This is Socrates’ diagnosis of what troubles Critobulus: that he sees many gentlemen quarrelling with other gentlemen, i.e., not being their friends. How does this come [about]? That is not sufficient a diagnosis of Critobulus’ difficulty. Yes?

**Reader:**

“Yes,” said Critobulus, “and such conduct is not confined to individuals, but even the cities that care most for the right and have least liking for the wrong are often at enmity.

These thoughts make me despair about the acquisition of friends. For I see on the one hand that rogues cannot be friends with one another—for how could the ungrateful, the careless, the selfish, the faithless, the incontinent, form friendships? I feel sure, then, that rogues are by their nature enemies rather than friends. But then, as you point out, neither can rogues ever join in friendship with honest men, for how can wrongdoers become friendly with those who hate their conduct? And if we must add that the votaries of virtue strive with one another for headship in cities, and envy and hate one another, who then will be friends and where shall loyalty and faithfulness be found?” (II.6.18-20)

**LS:** Ya, so that is a complete disjunction here. Low people cannot be friends to gentlemen. What is the second case? No, no, the low people are necessarily enemies to each other, but the low people also cannot be friends to the gentlemen. But what is most shocking is that the gentlemen are not necessarily friends to one another. And there, this is Critobulus’ predicament. Is the point clear? Which Socrates must now—[is the] problem clear, which Socrates must now try to solve to Critobulus’ satisfaction? Now let us see what he is going to say.

**Reader:**

“Ah, Critobulus, but there is a strange complication in these matters. Some elements in man's nature make for friendship: men need one another, feel pity, work together for their common good, and, conscious of the facts, are grateful to one another. But there are hostile elements in men. For, holding the same things to be honourable and pleasant, they fight for them, fall out and take sides. Strife and anger lead to hostility, covetousness to enmity, jealousy to hatred. Nevertheless, through all these—” (II.6.21-22)

**LS:** Now let us stop here—I’m sorry, let us stop here first. So men are by nature *good* and they are by nature bad. So both the Hobbes and the Rousseau of the popular legend are wrong. And as for the hostility in them, that was frequently explained in social science, if my memory does not deceive me, that the adversaries have different values or value-systems. Here it is said they have the *same* values and that is the reason why they are at enmity. There was a story, I think, of Charles V and Francis I, where one of them said of the other: “What I want, my brother Frances or Charles wants too; namely, Milan.” And that was the reason why they were at war. So this, in this two-fold ingredient—the friendly and the hostile—that is found in man as man, and not necessarily only in gentlemen but also in gentlemen. And therefore let us see whether gentlemanship provides the solution.

**Reader:**

“Nevertheless through all these barriers friendship slips, and unites the gentle natures. For thanks to their virtue these prize the untroubled security of moderate possessions above sovereignty won by war; despite hunger and thirst, they can share their food and drink without a pang; and although they delight in the charms of beauty they can resist the lure and avoid offending those whom they should respect; they can not only share wealth lawfully and keep from covetousness, but also supply one another's wants; they can compose strife not only without pain, but with advantage to one another, and prevent anger from pursuing its way towards remorse: but jealousy they take away utterly, regarding their own good things as belonging to their friends, and thinking their friend's good things to be their own.” (II.6.22-23)

**LS:** So in—gentlemanship enables gentlemen to overcome the hostile ingredient of man, and therefore . . . Of course, this does not completely solve the difficulty because Socrates did not deny what Critobulus had said before, that friends are in fact quarrelling with one another, especially for higher positions in the city. Yes?

**Reader:** “Surely, then, it is likely that true gentlemen will share public honours too not only without harm to one another, but to their common benefit? For those who desire to win honour and to bear rule in their cities that they may have power to embezzle, to treat others with violence, to live in luxury, are bound to be unjust, unscrupulous, incapable of unity. But if a man seeks to be honoured in a state that he may not be the victim of injustice himself and may help his friends in a just cause, and when he takes office may try to do some good to his country, why should he be incapable of union with one like himself? Will his connexion with other gentlemen render him less capable of serving his friends? Will he be less able to benefit his city with the help of other gentlemen?” (II.6.24-25)

**LS:** Let us stop here for a second. Socrates still continues his proof that gentlemanship can be a solution to the difficulty which bothered Critobulus. There is one point which we must discuss for a moment. In this paragraph he had said, which is translated by Marchant “the country”; in Greek it is the *patris*, the fatherland. That is a word, a term which occurs rather rarely in Xenophon, and it has hitherto occurred only in Book 2, chapter one. And <sup>25</sup>Book 2, chapter one and chapter six are hitherto the most political chapters, as we have seen and as we will probably see more as we go on. Book 2, chapter one was a conversation with Aristippus, the least patriotic <sup>26</sup>interlocutor of Socrates. Now, let us look at these passages in Book 2, chapter one. The first occurs in paragraph 14.

**Reader:** ““A very cunning trick, that!’ cried Socrates, ‘for ever since the death of Sinis and Sceiron and Procrustes<sup>ii</sup> no one injures strangers! And yet nowadays those who take a hand in the affairs of their homeland pass laws—” (II.2.14)

**LS:** Ya, homeland is again the fatherlands. Yes? We don’t need the rest of this paragraph. Paragraph 19, the same chapter.

**Reader:** “Rewards like these are indeed of little worth after all the toil; but what of those who toil to win good friends, or to subdue enemies, or to make themselves capable in body and soul of managing their own homes well, of helping their friends and serving their fatherland?”<sup>iii</sup> (II.2.19)

**LS:** Ya, there [it] is again. <sup>27</sup>It was said <sup>28</sup>both times by Socrates. Now let us turn to another passage in the same chapter, paragraph 33, where not Socrates but Virtue speaks.

**Reader:** ““To my friends meat and drink bring sweet and simple enjoyment: for they wait till they crave them. And a sweeter sleep falls on them than on idle folk: they are not vexed at awaking from it, nor for its sake do they neglect to do their duties. The young rejoice to win the praise of the old; the elders are glad to be honoured by the young; with joy they recall their deeds

<sup>ii</sup> Highwaymen slain by Theseus, Plutarch, *Thes.* c. 8 f.

<sup>iii</sup> In translation: “country”

past, and their present well-doing is joy to them, for through me they are dear to the gods, lovely to friends, precious to their fatherland<sup>iv</sup>.” (II.2.33)

**LS:** Ya. “Fatherlands”

**Reader:** Lands.

**LS:** Now, this is what Virtue says about *her* followers, but when she spoke to Heracles about *his* life she did not use the term fatherland. In paragraph 28.

**Reader:** ““For of all things good and fair, the gods give nothing to man without toil and effort. If you want the favour of the gods, you must worship the gods: if you desire the love of friends, you must do good to your friends: if you covet honour from a city, you must aid that city—””

**LS:** From some city. Hm? Some city.

**Reader:** ““if you are fain to win the admiration of all Hellas for virtue, you must strive to do good to Hellas—”” (II.2.28)

**LS:** Ya, here she doesn’t speak of fatherland. She speaks of “some city” and of Greece when she discusses Heracles’ own case. And does this make sense, that she does not speak of Heracles’ fatherland? Who was Heracles’ father? At least one—

**Student:** Zeus.

**LS:** Pardon?

**Several students:** Zeus.

**LS:** Zeus. And Zeus would not have a fatherland in this sense. But the point which we have to consider is Xenophon himself. Xenophon was of course an Athenian, but he was exiled and he lived most of his life outside of Athens. He went first to Cyrus in Asia Minor, and then he joined the Spartans, who had defeated Athens a short while before. And <sup>29</sup>he stayed with Spartans, and later on, a few years later on, there was a new war between Athens and Sparta. And there was a battle at Coronea, where Xenophon was [on]<sup>30</sup> the wrong side, and which shows that his relation to his fatherland was rather dubious.

Now I would like to read to you a remark by a historian, a classical scholar, who was perhaps the first to destroy the reputation, the high reputation in which Xenophon was held throughout the ages. The man in question is Niebuhr, the famous historian of Rome. “Truly no state has ever expelled a more degenerate son than this Xenophon. Plato too was not a good citizen; he did not deserve Athens, he has taken incomprehensible steps, he stands like a sinner compared with the saints, Thucydides and Demosthenes, but still how different from that old fool!”<sup>v</sup> The old fool being Xenophon. Now, I think that it is no accident that this was the first argument, as far as I

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<sup>iv</sup> In translation: “native land”

<sup>v</sup> REF TO NIEBUHR



know, which was used to demolish Xenophon's reputation. And everyone today must admit that there are excuses for a man who acted like Xenophon, who fought on the wrong side, because there may be a civil war, a civil war extending to many cities, to many states. And this allegiance may become more important than the allegiance to the city. I mean, in our age I believe the experiences abound. No one would regard a man defecting from Soviet Russia as an incomprehensibly bad human being, or from the Nazi Germany, and similar things.

The point, the question which is involved in this passage, in this matter, has been stated with the greatest clarity by Aristotle. The ordinary view, then and now, was that the *polis*, the city, is the object of the highest loyalty. A good citizen is a man who does his best for the city in all circumstances, regardless of what changes the city undergoes. If the city is, let us say, democratic, he will be a good administrator, whatever it is, if it turns into a Nazi or Communist, he will always be a good administrator. You know that. So the good citizen is a man who is wholly indifferent to the *regime*. Against this, Aristotle says, *no*, because what gives the city its unity is not the place where it is located nor the race, the blood, nor anything else, but the regime. If a city changes its regime from, say, oligarchy to democracy, it is no longer the same city. Of course it can also cease to be the same city if the original inhabitants are expelled and others come in, that's clear. But the interesting case and the important case is this: this is no longer the same city if the regime is changed. Aristotle starts from usage, that if a tyrant is dethroned, or whatever they did with them in ancient times, then people say afterward: This, the debt which he incurred will not be paid, because who incurred that debt? Not the city, *but* the tyrant. And the same is also true in change to other regimes. Now Aristotle generalizes that: just as people say a city living under a tyrant is no longer a city, Aristotle says: Well, it is a city, but a different city, and [what]<sup>31</sup> is true of the relation of a tyrannically ruled city to a democratically ruled city is true of all changes of regime which may occur.

Now this leads to paradoxical consequences. We speak as a matter of course, say, of the history of the English constitution, meaning the constitution of England from the time of the Anglo-Saxons, if not before, up to 1970. There is the same united England [that] exists then as it exists now. And if someone says that goes too far, you have to take in at least the Norman conquest, all right, then it would be from 1066 to today. And Aristotle denies this, denies that this is a unity. These are different *Englands*. Well, as we say quite frequently, that is no longer the same country, but we mean this in a metaphoric sense. Aristotle says that must be understood *literally*, because no change is greater, no change is more fundamental, than the change in that to which the city as a whole is dedicated, the change in the *end* or purpose to which the city is dedicated. I do not know whether I made this point clear. Xenophon never gave an analysis of this thing, but he knew of course of the difference between the city and the regimes, and speaks of it especially in his *Greeks Histories* but also elsewhere. And in the nineteenth century, especially in the nineteenth century, when Niebuhr developed this criticism, there emerged such a thing called the state. And the state, that was not a regime. I do not know what it was. This could not be affected by such changes. But we have seen it in our age and see it all the time. Niebuhr's view may be true of what we call normal times, when a regime is firmly established and the mass of the people is loyal to it, but is not true in extreme cases. Unfortunately, in the twentieth century we have more . . . of extremism than of normality. Yes?

**Student:** What would you say about the argument that people make in order to obviate the paradox, and say that those who oppose themselves to a bad regime are simply being patriots in the fuller sense of the word, that they're being loyal to *the* fundamental common good of their land? And that there is a common good that is not simply relative to regime. For instance, one could take Aristotle's example and say that, let's say a tyrant has been thrown out by a democracy, but let's say the tyrant contracted certain things for certain, or contracted certain debts which were contracted in the service of the common good. Well, then the democracy is supposed to pay those debts.

**LS:** Ya, sure. Surely. Aristotle doesn't say it, but since he was a sensible man, he surely thought that. Because that's the only just solution.

**Student:** Yeah.

**LS:** If this tyrant incurred debts to feather his own nest, not a penny to his creditors. But if he did it for the manifest good of the city, ya, of course it must be paid. I have been told that this is a principle of international law even today.

**Student:** Yeah, yeah.

**LS:** It shows that international law has some elements of reason. [Laughter]

**Student:** So it's rather clear that international law really does follow the . . . although now because they try and use positivist terms to justify what they're doing, their practice is more Aristotelian than their language. But it's almost always the case that when a new regime comes in it will not pay the debts of what it regards to be corrupt predecessors. But then I think this particular argument then comes into play: Well, was it done really for the well-being of the—?

**LS:** Ya, sure, not every revolution is honest, ya?

**Student:** But I thought that perhaps this raised a theoretical problem, namely, that there is for each country a common good that remains the same regardless of changes of regime?

**LS:** Yes, but could the common good not also be, speaking practically, be reasonably controversial? And then there, you cannot simply say <sup>32</sup>[of] the other side to the conflict, they are bastards or crooks, and the other are the nice people, you know? And then one must be . . . And I think <sup>33</sup>in Aristotle it amounts to this: that whatever may be wrong [with] <sup>34</sup>kinds of regimes which he deplores, he has to reckon with them. I mean, why did he speak so extensively about the various kinds of democracies and oligarchies <sup>35</sup>if they did not have some merits? The one which he unqualifiedly condemns is tyranny. But democracy and oligarchy, this is a conflict that was repeated at least into the nineteenth century, starting from the eighteenth century already. It is still continued in our age.

**Student:** But I suppose that one could say—perhaps it would be not so interesting, but one could say that there is a minimal common good that any tolerable regime has to measure up to. In other words, a certain lowest common requirement for decency, I guess.

**LS:** Do you mean something like an irrigation system?

**Student:** Yeah, and, and some elementary rules for exchange.

**LS:** Ya, ya. Yes. Yes, that is usually recognized in every regime, no? We read paragraph 26, I believe, no? Or 25?

**Reader:** 26.

**LS:** 26.

**Reader:** “Even in the public [games it is clear that, if the strongest competitors were allowed to join forces]<sup>vi</sup> against the weaker, they would win all the events, they would carry off all the prizes. True, that is not permitted in the games; but in politics, where the gentlemen are the strongest, nobody prevents anyone from forming any combination he may choose for the benefit of the state; surely, then, in public life it is a gain to make friends with the best, and to see in them partners and fellow-workers in a common cause, and not rivals. But, again, it is easily clear that anyone who goes to war will need allies, and more of them if he is to fight an army of gentlemen. Moreover, those who are willing to fight at your side must be well treated that they may be willing to exert themselves; and it is a far sounder plan to show kindness to the best, who are fewer in number, than to the worst, who are the greater company; for the bad—”

**LS:** Ya, ya, I’m sorry. “For the bad.”

**Reader:** “for the bad want many more kindnesses than the good.” (II.6.26)

**LS:** Ya, many more benefits, many more doles. So in other words, what he suggests here is a kind of alliance of all gentlemen, preferable from the gentleman’s point of view to any other combination. That was a very practical suggestion at least to that extent, because there were always gentlemen who tried to get support by the non-gentlemen. Think of Pericles and of other famous Greeks. So that is then a solution. The gentlemen are few and less in need than the worse men, who are many and demand many benefactions. The minority of gentlemen, who are friends, can easily keep down the majority consisting of non-gentlemen, so that what Xenophon here proposes is then at least what they call in ancient times aristocracy, meaning rule of the gentlemen. That would solve the difficulty with which Critobulus struggles. Yes?

**Reader:** ““Courage, Critobulus; try to be good, and when you have achieved that, set about catching your gentleman. Maybe, I myself, as an adept in love, can lend you a hand in the pursuit of gentlemen. For when I want to catch anyone it's surprising how I strain every nerve to have my love returned, my longing reciprocated by him, in my eagerness that he shall want me as much as I want him.”” (II.6.28)

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<sup>vi</sup> There is a break in the tape here; the words in brackets supplied by editors.

**LS:** Socrates returns now to the question of friendship, which is not merely political friendship, but friendship of an individual with another individual. And here Socrates is particularly apt, he says, because he is an erotic man and therefore able to help, he knows everything which belongs to the acquisition of friendship. Yes?

**Reader:**

“I see that you too will feel this need when you want to form a friendship. So do not hide from me the names of those whom you wish to make your friends; for I am careful to please him who pleases me, and so, I think, I am not without experience in the pursuit of men.”

“Well, Socrates,” said Critobulus in reply, “these are the lessons I have long wished to learn, especially if the same skill will serve to win a good soul and a fair face.”

“Ah no, Critobulus,” said Socrates, “it belongs not to my skill to lay hands on the fair and force them to submit. I am convinced that the reason why men fled from Scylla was that she laid hands on them; but the Sirens laid hands on no man; from far away they sang to all, and therefore, we are told, all submitted, and hearing were enchanted.”<sup>vii</sup> (II.6.29-31)

**LS:** Do you see something?

**Student:** What a strange paragraph.

**LS:** Pardon?

**Student:** What a strange paragraph, because he seems to be saying that the winner of a fair face is like Scylla, laying hands upon, and the winner of a good soul is like the Sirens.

**LS:** No, <sup>36</sup>he says Scylla is the undesirable thing. They are too impetuous and therefore repel people, but the Sirens were non-impetuous, <sup>37</sup>[they] were not aggressive and therefore people listened to them.

**Student:** Is this the same kind of thing that Socrates is saying to Glaucon?

**LS:** I beg your pardon?

**Student:** Is this the same kind of thing that Socrates is trying to tell Glaucon?

**LS:** Which, what remark of Socrates to Glaucon do you have in mind?

**Student:** Well, I’m thinking about generally the first part of the *Republic*, where Glaucon <sup>38</sup>presents himself as a very erotic man, a man of great passion, who seems to feel that the winning of everything is done pretty much the same way, whether it’s a fair face or a good soul, and it seems that in both cases Glaucon would tend to be more like Scylla than like the Sirens.

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<sup>vii</sup> *Odyssey* XII. 39f., adapted.

**LS:** Well, the first—let me see, first, in paragraph 30, the point which Critobulus makes is this: a man may be a gentleman but <sup>39</sup>he may not be desirable as a friend, because he wants friends who are beautiful, good-looking, but not every gentleman is good-looking. More generally stated, the statement makes sense: not every gentleman can possibly be a friend of every other gentleman, and therefore a principle of selection is needed. If you want <sup>40</sup>to speak here of a science, as Socrates does, the erotic science.

**Student:** Why does he say—Critobulus asks the same trick that’s going to be used to win the good soul could also be used to win the fair face. Clearly he has something in mind, one can see—

**LS:** Ya, surely. But not all good in soul have a fair face.

**Student:** But he doesn’t seem to be making a distinction between those who . . . sometimes one tries to win friends because they have a good soul or tries to win people because they have . . .

**LS:** Yes, this would not be sufficient for Critobulus.

**Student:** It wouldn’t?

**LS:** No, he wants to have good-looking friends.

**Student:** He wants a good-looking and a good soul?

**LS:** Yes, I think so.

**Student:** Oh, I see. It looks like he’s making a distinction between—

**LS:** Ya, <sup>41</sup>there’s surely a distinction. There are people who <sup>42</sup>have good character and are not good-looking.

**Student:** But there are some also that are good-looking and don’t particularly have good souls.

**LS:** Ya, then he wouldn’t want to have them. That has been disposed of, because the men who have a bad soul cannot be friends. That was said before. So you have to look for someone who has a good character.

**Student:** I thought Critobulus might have been—

**LS:** No, no. No. And I <sup>43</sup>did not quite get what you meant regarding the differences between Scylla and the Sirens. But it is the Sirens [who] are restrained, reserved. For this reason they are successful. Scylla is aggressive and therefore fails.

**Student:** Then why does he say: “It belongs not to my skill to lay hands on the fair and force them to submit,” and right before that he says: “Ah no, Critobulus,” and just above that, “the same skill will serve to win a good soul and a fair face.” “Ah no, it belongs not to my skill to lay

hands.” In other words, does that mean that the skill to lay hands is the skill that serves to win a good soul? That’s what seems to be—

**LS:** No, no.

**Student:** Just from the grammar of it.

**LS:** No, Socrates’ skill is the same which he ascribes here to the Sirens. However, there is something—yes?

**Student:** Doesn’t what he here says, <sup>44</sup>what he says about the Sirens here contradict what he had said—well, at least of his interpretation of a passage of Homer that he quoted earlier—I mean, there he says the Sirens didn’t sing for everyone, and here he describes them as singing, and—

**LS:** I did not quite, what is this— ?

**Student:** I’ll say it a little louder. Doesn’t this description of the Sirens here contradict his interpretation of what they were—

**LS:** Yes. Why? I think so too, but why?

**Student:** Well, because here they sing to everyone, and formerly, in his earlier description of them, they sang only to people who sought virtue.

**LS:** Yes, that is undoubtedly the case. A clear contradiction in this respect. But how can we understand that? Now in the first place, in the former case, that was in paragraph 11, <sup>45</sup>he spoke of Homer, didn’t he? “You have heard from Homer.” And here he says, “people say.” What Homer says and what people say needn’t be identical. But you can say that is tricky, and we, what I said is tricky, and therefore we must find a better explanation. Could it not be that the whole point of view has changed from that earlier discussion to the point we are now? And could this not be connected with the fact that gentlemanship, making friends of gentlemen, became the theme?

**Student:** The what?

**LS:** The theme. From what we have seen in the *Oeconomicus* about gentlemen, that would make sense, because there we saw that what characterizes the gentleman is not fundamentally different from what characterizes his stewards, you know? They may very well be slaves. And then this whole edifice breaks down and you can then say all men love virtue *in a certain sense* of the word virtue. And then you can speak of all men, of all men, but in the former case, Socrates spoke only of a higher kind of virtue for which not all men long. This doesn’t satisfy you?

**Student:** Well, I’m not sure. It just seems contrary to what my expectation would be about this in the change of theme that you describe. The gentlemen do seem to be in some respects, even as they have just been described, a little shortly before with respect to the multitude of the city, to

be a somewhat more select class than—or to be a restricted group not, I mean, in some respects different from everyone else.

**LS:** I could not hear—

**Mr. Williamson:** He finds it difficult to reconcile this with the idea of the gentlemen being a rather restricted and special class. Is that—

**Student:** I couldn't hear.

**Mr. Williamson:** I didn't hear the end of—I'm not sure I heard the end of your question, actually.

**Student:** Well, when you—in your answer you said that this difference in the description of what the Sirens do corresponds to the change in the theme, to the theme of gentlemanship, whereas up to this point, I mean, at least in the paragraphs preceding what he said about the Sirens, the gentlemen are described not as being similar to everyone else but as being different than everyone else.

**LS:** From whom? Different from whom?

**Student:** The other people in the—

**LS:** Ya, I say, from the common people.

**Student:** Yes.

**LS:** Yes. But <sup>46</sup>they may be different from the common people, but this difference may become *negligible* from a higher point of view. From this higher point of view, the superiority of the gentlemen may perhaps be not more than a difference of external manners. That's one way. That is possible, isn't it? And then of course you can say [that] what is true of gentlemen is true of all men. It all depends on what you understand by virtue. And Socrates thought, obviously, of a different kind of virtue in the first passage about the Sirens, and of a different kind of virtue in the second statement [about]<sup>47</sup> the Sirens. Does someone else have another suggestion? Then let us go on.

**Reader:**

“I am not going to put a hand on anyone,” said Critobulus, “so teach me any good plan you know for making friends.”

“Then won't you put lip to lip either?”

“Courage!” answered Critobulus, “I won't touch a lip with mine either — unless the owner is fair!”

“That's an unfortunate beginning for you, Critobulus! The fair won't submit to such conduct; but the ugly like it, supposing that they are called fair for the beauty of their souls.”

“A kiss for the fair,” exclaimed Critobulus, “and a thousand kisses for the good! That shall be my motto, so take courage, and teach me the art of catching friends.”

“Well then, Critobulus,” said Socrates, “when you want to make a new friend, will you let me warn him that you admire him and want his friendship?”

“Warn him by all means: no one hates those who praise him, so far as I know.”

“Suppose I go on to warn him that your admiration makes you well disposed toward him, you won't think I am slandering you, will you?”

“Nay; when I guess that anyone feels well disposed towards me, a like goodwill towards him is begotten in me.”

“Then you will permit me to say this about you to those whose friendship you desire. Now if you will give me permission to tell them besides that you are devoted to your friends and nothing gives you so much pleasure as good friends; that you take as much pride in your friends' fair achievements as in your own, and as much pleasure in your friends' good as in your own, and never weary of contriving it for your friend's; and you have made up your mind that a man's virtue consists in outdoing his friends in kindness and his enemies in mischief; then I think you will find me a useful companion in the quest of good friends.” (II.6.32-35)

**LS:** Yes. Now let us stop for one moment. So here there are various steps which Socrates may take in order to win potential friends for Critobulus. And you see, here is his distinction at the beginning of paragraph 34: because you admire him, you are favorably disposed, benevolently disposed towards him. Admiring a man and being benevolently disposed toward him are two different things. This is clear? That is exactly the problem of friendship, that this benevolence is a crucial part. The combination of benevolence, good-will, and admiration makes a man desirable as a friend, since it flatters the potential friend. Again, nothing is said here of Critobulus' or his potential friends' *reasonableness*. This is as we have seen before. The main point of the whole argument, the whole difficulty, was this: the gentlemen <sup>48</sup>quarrel with one another because they are engaged in striving for superiority. And here, at the end, we see what the solution to this question would be. A man's virtue consists in overcoming one's friends in doing well, and one's enemies in doing ill. Overcoming, superiority, striving for superiority, remains intact, but it is now channeled in a peculiar way which is stated here: outdoing friends by doing them well and outdoing enemies in doing them ill. Now this is a virtue of a *man*, of an *anēr*. What about Socrates? Was this Socrates' virtue? Which enemy did Socrates outdo in doing ill to him? I believe we can say that this is of course not the virtue of Socrates, and that confirms what I said before: that <sup>49</sup>a shift in the meaning of virtue has taken place through this chapter in this, where the subject is gentlemanship or friendship among gentlemen. Yes?

**Student:** Well, there's something of an argument like this in Plato's *Apology*.

**LS:** Ya, sure, and in the First Book of the *Republic*.

**Student:** Yeah. But—or even more clearly in the *Gorgias*.

**LS:** Yes, where Socrates turns it around, ya. But still we are then confronted with the question: Is the Xenophonic Socrates identical with the Platonic Socrates? And therefore we have to limit ourselves here to Xenophon. But when Xenophon speaks of Socrates' virtue in the peroration of



the *Memorabilia*, he speaks only of his doing well and not a word about his doing ill. Now, if this is so, Socrates <sup>50</sup>did not possess the virtue of a man. He was not a man and therefore *andreia*, the virtue of a man grammatically, even, courage or manliness is not mentioned by Xenophon among the virtues of Socrates. And therefore also that Socrates likes to swear, in Xenophon, by Hera, which is more a woman's oath than a man's oath.

**Student:** But the difference between a man's virtue as its presented here and Socrates' virtue, would that difference originate out of the fact that Socrates is not politically inclined, that he wasn't an Ischomachus?

**LS:** Yes, yes. <sup>51</sup>That has to do with it, because *polis* is necessarily self-assertive. That's its virtue. And the individuals of course are also self-assertive, but not all individuals. And surely that <sup>52</sup>you can say is the root of Socrates' reservation against the city. The cities are necessary, but he cannot *fully share* the city's wish.

**Student:** We can say that Socrates was not self-assertive, but—

**LS:** I would say Socrates was not self-assertive.

**Student:** You would say?

**LS:** I would say that he was not self-assertive. I mean, not self-assertive doesn't mean that he is—how do you call this?—a milksop [laughter], and that I do not mean, of course. But he could very well *assert* something and defend something, a view, against other people, and could be quite tough in that, as we know. But that is not what I mean by assert, that word, he did not assert *himself*, he asserted his *logos*. That's a different thing.

**Student:** I see the difference.

**LS:** Well, then. That's all the point. Yes?

**Student:** I wonder if Mr. Hill may have in mind certain passages in Aristotle, in, I think maybe even in the discussion of friendship, where—though it really amounts to the same thing, but sort of spelling it out in a theoretical way. At a certain point for the best man, he makes the argument that the man's *logos* is really the man.

**LS:** Ya, all right, then we have to admit an ambiguity also in self.

**Student:** Yeah, yeah.

**LS:** Ya, sure, that is—I thought you meant something else in Aristotle, when he says that—oh yes, when he says the men who have the greatest right to demand political power are the least willing to assert that. I do not remember exactly, do you remember the passage? Well, let us try to complete the reading of this chapter. Paragraph 30. Yes?

**Student:** I'm not quite sure I understand how the book begins with a discussion of Aristippus, and I would just like to ask if this non-assertive and apolitical character of the Socratic virtue, is<sup>53</sup> what lends a kind of appropriateness to the beginning with the non-assertive and perhaps apolitical Aristippus, and . . . .

**LS:** Ya. Well, there is of course always the difficulty that the division into Books may have a purely external reason: that roughly, you know, the rolls, there were many more lengths than maximum length, that might have played the role, that the Book 1 would have maybe been too large with addition of chapter one. I do not know anything of these technical matters. But I will say, if I take for one moment, argue it out as you mean to argue it out, I would say it is this: that<sup>54</sup> by separating chapter one, Book 2, it becomes less clear that for the first part of the work, piety, continence, piety, continence, and so on, is the subject. And that, I believe, is a good enough reason. Now I see it is already too late. We will then finish reading the chapter next time, ya?

[end of tape]

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<sup>1</sup> Deleted "one"

<sup>2</sup> Deleted "that Socrates discusses"

<sup>3</sup> Deleted "does"

<sup>4</sup> Deleted "this authenticity is"

<sup>5</sup> Deleted "we must"

<sup>6</sup> Deleted "he had"

<sup>7</sup> Deleted "to which"

<sup>8</sup> Deleted "how to"

<sup>9</sup> Deleted "after"

<sup>10</sup> Deleted "must one"

<sup>11</sup> Deleted "This is"

<sup>12</sup> Deleted "but a"

<sup>13</sup> Deleted "this was never"

<sup>14</sup> Deleted "in the"

<sup>15</sup> Deleted "of"

<sup>16</sup> Deleted "for"

<sup>17</sup> Deleted "be"

<sup>18</sup> Deleted "Critobulus"

<sup>19</sup> Deleted "has"

<sup>20</sup> Deleted "what"

<sup>21</sup> Deleted "the quote"

<sup>22</sup> Deleted "That"

<sup>23</sup> Deleted "says"

<sup>24</sup> Deleted "so in the"

<sup>25</sup> Deleted "Book One"

<sup>26</sup> Deleted "of Socrates"

<sup>27</sup> Deleted "These"

<sup>28</sup> Deleted "in"

<sup>29</sup> Deleted "there was"

<sup>30</sup> Deleted "at"

<sup>31</sup> Deleted "that"

<sup>32</sup> Deleted "that"

<sup>33</sup> Deleted "of it"

<sup>34</sup> Deleted "of"

<sup>35</sup> Deleted "if they were not"

- 
- <sup>36</sup> Deleted “it is”
  - <sup>37</sup> Deleted “did not”
  - <sup>38</sup> Deleted “is, is, has”
  - <sup>39</sup> Deleted “he have”
  - <sup>40</sup> Deleted “to do”
  - <sup>41</sup> Deleted “there are”
  - <sup>42</sup> Deleted “are”
  - <sup>43</sup> Deleted “would”
  - <sup>44</sup> Deleted “isn’t”
  - <sup>45</sup> Deleted “he said”
  - <sup>46</sup> Deleted “may this”
  - <sup>47</sup> Deleted “of”
  - <sup>48</sup> Deleted “are”
  - <sup>49</sup> Deleted “there is”
  - <sup>50</sup> Deleted “was not”
  - <sup>51</sup> Deleted “that is”
  - <sup>52</sup> Deleted “has”
  - <sup>53</sup> Deleted “that”
  - <sup>54</sup> Deleted “only by”

## Session 15: no date

**Leo Strauss:** Now, before class a lady told me something about her reaction to Xenophon. Not so much that Xenophon had a certain view of friendship, but that he had the nerve to ascribe that view to Socrates. Well, we must—I understand that, but we must see whether we cannot perhaps meet that objection while we go on. Let us postpone the discussion until we have read all the chapters on friendship. And now let us begin.

In every place outside of St. John's, what we are doing here would be called a historical study. We are not indeed concerned with discovering the so-called historical Socrates, the Socrates as he truly was in contradistinction to the Platonic or Xenophontic Socrates. This has a parallel in the quest for the historical Jesus in contrast to the Jesus of the *Gospels* or of Paul. In my opinion, we solve the problem of the historical Socrates, as it were, accidentally, for we find eventually that the Platonic Socrates and the Xenophontic Socrates are *the same*, with this difference: that Plato inquires much more deeply into the presuppositions or implications of the "what is?" question than Xenophon does. Yet this doesn't do away with the fact that we try to consider Xenophon's Socrates. We try to find out 'what *he* thought about virtue in contradistinction to the truth about virtue, if virtue is the right word. Let us only think of the fact that there is no Old Testament word for virtue, and yet quite a bit about good and the good life. So there may be already a treacherous presupposition involved in the very notion of virtue. This observation which I just made shows still more the historical character of what we are trying to do. Let us then forget about Socrates and about the Greeks and think only of *The Truth*, with capital T's in both cases, the all-comprehensive Truth. We strive for knowledge of the Truth. We are ignorant of it, but this does not mean that our mind is *blank*. It is filled with opinions. And our task is to replace the opinions by knowledge. But we cannot do that if we do not know our opinions, if we cannot *state* them, make them fully explicit, if we do not clarify them. When we try to clarify them, we observe that our opinions are not *our* opinions, but in the main inherited opinions. This leads to the consequence that we cannot clarify them if we do not go back to the point of their origin. The philosophic task of clarifying our opinions shifts insensibly into what at least resembles a historical study. It seems to me that this reasoning is inescapable. Yet all the more remarkable is the fact that until a short time ago, roughly the end of the eighteenth century, this reasoning was wholly unknown. A fundamental change from a philosophizing which in no way resembled historical study to a philosophizing which very much resembles historical study has taken place. What does this change mean? What do we tacitly presuppose when our thought is, as it cannot help to be "quote historical unquote"? In order to answer this question, we must know the alternative to historical philosophizing—that's to say, non-historical philosophic thought, pre-modern philosophic thought. And in this broad context we may also study, for reasons to which I have referred, Xenophon, which we'll do now. This much as a general reminder of the purpose of this course.

Now let us turn to the section which we are discussing now, the section on friendship. Chapter six, of which we have read most, up to paragraph 35, deals with friendship among gentlemen. And in this chapter, a movement takes place from the primary view according to which the gentleman is *the* good man to a deeper view which questions the supremacy of the gentleman. You are familiar with this questioning from the *Oeconomicus*, where the central chapter brings a confrontation of *the* perfect gentleman and Socrates, and there questioning of the perfect

gentleman. That such a change takes place is shown by the two statements on the Sirens. First it is said they allure only those who wish to be honored on account of virtue, and then it is said they allure all men. Virtue must mean two different things in the two cases. Let us re-read the last sentence of chapter 35: “that you have seen that the virtue of a man consists in.”

**Reader:** <sup>2</sup>“and you have made up your mind that a man's virtue consists in outdoing his friends in kindness and his enemies in mischief; then I think you will find me a useful companion in the quest of good friends.” (II.6.35)

**LS:** Ya, I pointed out last time that this is not a virtue which Socrates has or wishes to have. And as a proof of it, a simple proof, let us look again at the peroration, the last paragraph of the *Memorabilia*, where Xenophon enumerates the virtues of Socrates.

**Reader:** “This was the tenor of the conversation—”?

**LS:** No, that belongs to . . . all right.

**Reader:** “This was the tenor of his conversation with Hermogenes and with the others. All who knew what manner of man Socrates was and who seek after virtue continue to this day to miss him beyond all others, as the chief of helpers in the quest of virtue. For myself, I have described him as he was: so religious that he did nothing without counsel from the gods; so just that he did no injury, however small, to any man, but conferred the greatest benefits on all who dealt with him—” (IV.8.11)

**LS:** Ya, we need only this. So that was Socrates’ justice. He did not harm anyone and helped the people who were willing and able to be helped in the most important matters. So the virtue of a man as described here, in chapter six, Book 2, is not Socrates’ virtue. Now this change in the understanding of [the] gentleman is prepared by the fact that Socrates does not mention reasonableness, sensibleness, *phrônesis*, as a necessary qualification of the desirable friend. You’ll remember Socrates said all kinds of things, continence and so on, but reasonableness does not occur. And it is perhaps an indication of this absence of *phrônesis* here that at the very beginning of chapter six Xenophon uses a term which he uses very rarely, and I believe only here in the *Memorabilia*. Can you have a look at it, Mr. Moseby? Very beginning of chapter six. Yes.

**Reader:** In the following conversation I thought he gave instruction for testing the qualities that make a man's friendship worth winning.

““Tell me—”” (II.6.1)

**LS:** No, that’s all I want. Literally: He seemed to me to make sensible people, with a view to what is said here. *Phrenoûn*. That is the same, [it] etymologically belongs together with *phrônesis*. This only in passing. *Phrônesis* is also not mentioned in the two preceding chapters, chapters four and five, but there, there is no enumeration <sup>3</sup>apparently complete of the qualities which a friend should have. We could somehow be in agreement with the use or non-use of *phrônesis* in the *Oeconomicus* if we state it simply: gentlemen do not possess *phrônesis*, and therefore they are a lower kind of men. But how they find their bearing in the world and how they live, that’s a great question, but it would not be by *phrônesis*. The stronger statement to the

same effect occurs in Plato's *Republic*, towards the end of the book, when Plato speaks, or Socrates speaks, of the choices which various kinds of men make regarding a future life when such a choice is required. And then the people who are brought up in customary virtue, and very decent as such, choose a life of tyranny. They have no intrinsic defense against this terrible inclination, and the only defense against it would be *phrônesis*, and that is for Plato and Socrates and for Xenophon identical with philosophy. Nevertheless, in spite of this grave defect of the gentlemen, they supply the solution to the *political* problem—*perhaps*. I think that is suggested to us by chapter six, Book 2, <sup>4</sup>when the question comes up, how can there be friendship among gentlemen? And then Socrates leads up to that—after having spoken of the friendly and hostile ingredients of man—leads up to this view that the gentlemen could overcome these hostile ingredients, could channel them in that way that they are friends to each other, keeping down, keeping subjected, the non-gentlemen. That is a kind of political order traditionally called aristocracy. And I think that was the crude, a crude practical suggestion of men like Xenophon and Plato. But whether that is a solution, is a sufficient solution, that can be questioned. If you look at what the various aristocracies have done and to their knowledge in their lifetime, in Corcyra and other places. Now let us then go on where we left off, paragraph 36.

**Reader:** ““Now why do you say this to me as if you were not free to say what you choose about me.””

**LS:** Ya, so, Critobulus somehow senses that Socrates will, that Socrates' praise of Critobulus will not be unqualified.

**Reader:** ““Not so indeed, by Zeus<sup>i</sup>: I can quote Aspasia against you. She once told me that good matchmakers are successful in making marriages only when the good reports they carry to and fro are true; false reports she would not recommend, for the victims of deception hate one another and the matchmaker too. I am convinced that this is sound, and so I think it is not open to me to say anything in your praise that I can't say truthfully.”” (II.6.36)

**LS:** So Socrates has learned from Aspasia the art of matchmaking, and that is connected with the fact that Socrates, as he had stated in this very chapter, is an erotic man. That somehow goes together. He has learned about these things from Aspasia, just as he has learned from Diotima the erotic things in Plato's *Banquet*. In both cases, foreign women. You see, here too Xenophon follows his general principle. Plato goes much higher: she is a prophetess from Mantinea. And Xenophon takes an extraordinary foreign woman, but still she lived most of her life in Athens and was a commonly known figure there. Yes?

**Reader:** ““It appears, Socrates, that you are the sort of friend to help me if I am in any way qualified to make friends: but if not, you won't make up a story to help me.”” (II.6.37)

**LS:** So just as he will not say in particular that Critobulus possesses the virtue of a man as defined shortly before—he had said only that Critobulus had come to know that this is a virtue of a man. That does not yet mean that he possesses that virtue. Yes?

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<sup>i</sup> “By Zeus” is not in the translation but is added by the reader.

**Reader:** ““How do you think I shall help you best, Critobulus, by false praise, or by urging you to try to be a good man? If you don't yet see clearly, take the following cases as illustrations. Suppose that I wanted to get a shipmaster to make you his friend, and as a recommendation told him that you are a good skipper, which is untrue; and suppose that he believed me and put you in charge of his ship in spite of your not knowing how to steer it: have you any reason to hope that you would not lose the ship and your life as well? Or suppose that I falsely represented to the Assembly that you are a born general, jurist and statesman—”” (II.6.37-38)

**LS:** No, “born” is not correct here. Strategic man, which means you possess the skill. A born general is not yet necessarily a man who possesses strategic skill. Ya?

**Reader:** ““and so persuaded the *polis* to commit her fortunes to you, what do you suppose would happen to the *polis* and to yourself under your guidance? Or again, suppose that I falsely described you to certain citizens in private as a thrifty, careful person, and persuaded them to place their affairs in your hands, wouldn't you do them harm and look ridiculous when you came to the test?”” (II.6.38)

**LS:** You see Critobulus as an economic man, we know this theme from the *Oeconomicus*. But here Socrates makes a distinction which is also familiar to us from the *Oeconomicus*: an economic man and a careful man. A man may know the whole economic art and not apply himself to it. One example would of course be Socrates, who is presented in the *Oeconomicus* as a man possessing the economic art and not applying himself to it, at least not as economic art is commonly understood. This passage here implies of course that at this time, at any rate, Critobulus is not an economic man. Whether he became an economic man through the conversation in the *Oeconomicus*, that is an open question, because nothing has been said there that Critobulus accepted Socrates' advice and acted accordingly. The argument here reminds a bit of the chapter on boasting. Here, of course, a boast: Critobulus would not boast, but Socrates would as it were boast on behalf of Critobulus. And that is a foolish thing, as was explained there. Yes?

**Reader:** ““Nay, Critobulus, if you want to be thought good at anything, you must try to be so; that is the quickest, the surest, the best way. You will find on reflection that every kind of virtue named among men is increased by study and practice.”” (II.6.39)

**LS:** See, they are increased. That's to say study and practice are not sufficient conditions for the virtues. What else would be required in addition to learning and practice?

**Student:** Nature.

**LS:** Yes, sure. And what he says here: all virtues called so among human beings. That means all virtues, whether they are genuine or only thought to be virtues, would fulfill this condition. To require, apart from nature, study and care. Ya?

**Reader:**

“Such is the view I take of our duty, Critobulus. If you have anything to say against it, tell me.”

“Why, Socrates,” said Critobulus, “I should be ashamed to contradict you, for I should be saying what is neither honourable nor true.” (II.6.39)

**LS:** Ya. Honorable or noble. So there are two distinct considerations: the noble and the true. One may say something noble which is not true—a noble lie—and one may say something true which is not noble. For example, if one says the truth about an ignoble thing, that is not by itself a noble action, yes? In other words, mere sincerity does not yet make a speech noble. So we have now reached the end of this long chapter, one of the longest in the book. Now, is there any point you would like to discuss before we turn to the sequel?

**Student:** I didn’t understand exactly what you meant by historical study.

**LS:** Ya, this is a consequence that you have a good training in St. John’s, but if you would go to any other place in the world, they would say if you read Xenophon or Plato or anything else these are historical subjects. Ya?

**Student:** I still don’t know. What does it mean to study something historically rather than—?

**LS:** Pardon?

**Student:** What does it mean to study something historically?

**LS:** As something that’s belonging to the past. These were, these are writers of the past and therefore the study is historical, stated as simply as possible.

**Student:** Would you say that the time when people stopped writing music corresponded for any reason to the time when people stopped writing philosophy?

**LS:** Since I know absolutely nothing of music, I cannot answer your question.

**Student:** I was thinking, perhaps, that the idea that philosophy became, after a certain point in the eighteenth century, a matter of historical study, because many of the things that could be said had been said by someone before. Perhaps this applies across the board to almost all kinds of intellectual endeavors, including some artistic ones.

**LS:** I still cannot quite follow you.

**Student:** Well, all I’m saying is that maybe more than philosophy, which has simply become a matter of historical—

**LS:** Oh I see, ya, ya, sure, today that is true. There is a kind of universality of history. That is true.

**Student (probably Mr. Klein):** That’s called humanities.

**LS:** Pardon?



**Mr. Klein:** That's called the humanities.

**LS:** Well, yes. But the humanities, that contains a vague reminder that it is not to be history. But that is not acted upon, except at St. John's, that's the only place. Well, then, let us go on.

**Student:** Yes, what I have, I have only a very simple question: What is friendship, according to what we read in Xenophon? What is in all these descriptions, is to the point of friend, real friendship, and what is really not belonging there?

**LS:** Union in—

**Student:** I will try to say what I miss in this.

**LS:** Oh, I'm sorry, but I would—I thought you asked me to answer what is here meant by friendship. Union in noble things.

**Student:** What? Union in—?

**LS:** *Union* of human beings in noble things.

**Student:** Yeah, and what the conditions are besides the nature is against . . . for the friendship, that's the cause of friendship. This I believe and this is—but what is the relationship, the union? What is this union?

**LS:** Ya, <sup>5</sup>we have read this passage in Book 1, chapter six, in which Socrates explains to the sophist Antiphon what he is doing in order to acquire good friends, or what he's doing with his friends, and this is that they are reading together the books of the wise of men of old, and if they find something which they understand and which they cherish, they take it out and in this way they become better. That is one form of the union in noble things. But noble is an ambiguous term. It may also mean something different, and then it would be the friendship of gentlemen, which was the subject of . . . . The third level is that you identify the noble with the good in the sense of the useful, and then you reach and arrive at a very utilitarian view of friendship as it was presented in chapter four and five. But that is only—that is here, ya. And there are probably more, but at any rate these three are for our present purposes the most important.

**Student:** Well, it is so, and it was this what you said. You cannot not agree. But in this chapter, [this] particular chapter on friendship, he misses—while the major point that friendship is some kind of affinity among people or, better to say, because it is a very rare thing, real friendship, *very* rare, and because—

**LS:** That all depends. When you use a looser—

**Student:** So it is affinity, affinity between two rather than many people. And affinity, what it means, affinity. He doesn't either use this word—once he uses . . . and never says what it means to . . . the affinity. This meaning of noble, noble not enough, that's meaning of . . . of, how do

you say, of sentiments and opinions and judgment and style between two, which [is] nearness to each other, this is one self, other self, so to say. And this is implied: we get close to good, to love, to good, that's what combines them. Instead of stressing this, Xenophon very much, in my opinion, tends to the other part, to utility in friendship. Utility and practical sense, in economical sense, friendship as commodity, almost.

**LS:** Ya, in chapters four and five, surely, friendship is—

**Student:** Go on, it is not. It is not.

**LS:** No, that is clear. But he doesn't do this always. This passage, I repeat, in Book 1, chapter six, presents an entirely different view. But the other view, <sup>6</sup>there are also this kind of utilitarian friendships, say, of business partners.

**Student:** That's not friendship.

**LS:** Yes, it is a kind of—

**Student:** Not friendship. Friendship doesn't bring some practical result about, well, well—

**LS:** No, also some sentiments and affections arise from that.

**Student:** That's all gradation of the very nice, amiable, gentleman way of being with people. With friendship, real friendship is not that.

**LS:** Ya, surely, that is—

**Student:** No!

**LS:** Ya, ya—

**Student:** It's not. And I suspect that for Xenophon, [it] never happened. Never. [Laughter] . . . but friendship as this commodification, his wife should have put . . . [laughter] like the other commodities, in his *Oeconomicus*, where he says the order should be, all right. He knows what this order is, and that's good and even beautiful order. And so the friends are a commodity which you have to keep. It's very, very useful. It is nice, it's maybe even pleasurable, but still not friendship.

**LS:** Ya, well—

**Student:** Mr. Strauss, one more thing, one more thing. Socrates, that's what offends me, that Socrates talks this way. [Laughter]

**LS:** Yes, yes, you told me that.

**Student:** Socrates, who has so many friends who were . . .

**LS:** What Xenophon wants to make clear, I believe, is that Socrates had many different *kinds* of friends and that this is of very great importance for understanding Socrates. I believe you will see in the sequel this point. I mean, that appearance speaks in your favor is doubtless true, doubtless true. But nevertheless I believe you are wrong, because appearances may be deceptive. Now let us begin to read, to read, ya?

**Reader:** “To pass to another subject.” (II.7.1)

**LS:** Of course . . . that is Mr. Marchant’s need for what he calls elegance, ya? There is not a word for “to pass to another subject.”

**Student:** Well, *kai mēn*, what, how would you?

**LS:** Ya, but surely not “to pass.” It’s not another subject . . . that is true . . . because it’s still friendship, an addition to that. Ya?

**Student:** The distresses of his friends that arose from ignorance he tried to cure by advice, those that were due to want by telling them how to help one another according to their power.

**LS:** Ya, “teaching,” not “telling” is the Greek word. So in other words, the second is also perhaps a defect due to a lack in understanding. Ya? Yes?

**Reader:**

On this subject too I will state what I know about him.

One day, noticing that Aristarchus looked glum, he said: “Aristarchus, you seem to have a burden on your mind. You should let your friends share it; possibly we may do something to ease you.”

“Ah yes, Socrates,” replied Aristarchus, “I am in great distress. Since the revolution there has been an exodus to the Piraeus, and a crowd of my women-folk, being left behind, are come to me,—sisters, nieces and cousins,—so that we are fourteen in the house without counting the slaves. We get nothing from our land, because our enemies have seized it, and nothing from our house property, now there are so few residents in the city. Portable property finds no buyers, and it's quite impossible to borrow money anywhere: I really think a search in the streets would have a better result than an application for a loan. It's hard, Socrates, to let one's people die, but impossible to keep so many in times like these.”

When Socrates heard this, he asked: (II.7.1-2)

**LS:** Let us stop. “When Socrates had heard this.” And he saw Aristarchus depressed, and he did not know why he was depressed, and this is entirely new to Socrates. Aristarchus was not a constant companion of Socrates, this seems to follow from that. Yes?

**Reader:** he asked: “How is it that with so many mouths to feed Ceramon not only contrives to provide for the needs of himself and his family, but actually saves enough to make him a rich man, whereas you, with so many mouths to feed, fear you will be starved to death?”

“The explanation, of course, is this: my dependents are gentlefolk, his are slaves.” (II.7.2-3)

**LS:** Yes, so this subject of gentlemanship comes up here again, but here applied to women.

**Reader:** From the Greek it’s free, free.

**LS:** Ya, free, ya. But still gentlefolk, ya.

**Reader:** ““And which do you think are the better, his slaves or your free<sup>ii</sup> gentlefolk?”” (II.7.4)

**LS:** No, no, say free, by all means, but we will see that nevertheless, however so on . . . Ya?

**Reader:**

“My free people<sup>iii</sup> I think.”

“Then is it not disgraceful that you with your free people should be in distress, while he is kept in affluence by his meaner household?”

“Of course his dependents are artisans, while mine have had a liberal education.” (II.7.4)

**LS:** [Laughter] You see, it’s not only that they are free men. Ya. Yes?

**Reader:**

“What is an artisan? one who knows how to produce something useful?”

“Certainly.”

“Are groats useful?”

“Yes, very.”

“And bread?”

“No less so.”

“What about men's and women's cloaks, shirts, capes, smocks?”

“Yes, all these things too are very useful.”

“Then don't the members of your household know how to make any of these?”

“I believe they can make all of them.”

“Don't you know, then, that by manufacturing one of these commodities, namely groats, Nausicydes keeps not only himself and his family, but large herds of swine and cattle as well, and has so much to spare that he often undertakes costly public duties; that Cyrebus feeds his whole family well and lives in luxury by baking bread, Demeas of Collytus by making capes, Menon by making cloaks; and most of the Megarians make a good living out of smocks?”

“Yes, of course; for they buy foreign slaves and can force them to make what is convenient, but my household is made up of liberals<sup>iv</sup> and relations.” [Laughter] (II.7.5-6)

**LS:** Ya, ya, now. Ya.

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<sup>ii</sup> “free” is not in the translation but supplied by the reader.

<sup>iii</sup> In translation: “gentlefolk”

<sup>iv</sup> In translation: “gentlefolk”

**Reader:** “And so, just because they are liberal<sup>v</sup> and related to you, you think they should do nothing but eat and sleep? Do you find that other—

**LS:** Freeman.

**Reader:**

“freemen<sup>vi</sup> who live this sort of life are better off and happier than those who are usefully employed in work that they understand? Or is it your experience that idleness and carelessness help men to learn what they ought to know and remember what they learn, to make themselves healthy and strong, and to get and keep things that are of practical use, but industry and carefulness are useless things? When these women learned the work that you say they understand, did they regard it as of no practical use, and had they no intention of taking it up, or did they mean to occupy themselves in it and obtain some benefit from it? Which makes men more prudent, idleness or useful employment? Which makes men more just, work or idle discussions about supplies? Besides, at present, I fancy, you don't love these ladies and they don't love you: you think they are a tax on you, and they see that you feel them to be a burden. And the danger in this state of things is that dislike may grow and their former gratitude fade away; but if you exert your authority and make them work, you will love them, when you find that they are profitable to you—” [Laughter]—

**LS:** Yes?

**Reader:**

“and they will be fond of you, when they feel that you are pleased with them. Both you and they will like to recall past kindnesses and will strengthen the feeling of gratitude that these engender; thus you will be better friends and feel more at home. To be sure, if they were going to do something disgraceful, death would be a better fate. But in point of fact the work they understand is, as it appears, the work considered the most honourable and the most suitable for a woman; and the work that is understood is always done with the greatest ease, speed, pride and pleasure. So do not hesitate to offer them work that will yield a return both to you and to them, and probably they will welcome your proposal.” “But by the gods<sup>vii</sup> said Aristarchus, “your advice seems so good, Socrates, that I think I shall now bring myself to borrow capital to make a start. Hitherto I have had no inclination to do so, knowing that when I had spent the loan I should not have the wherewithal to pay it.” (II.7.7-11)

**LS:** Ya, yes. Now you see here, regarding Mrs. Kaplan's question: <sup>7</sup>Is it not true that there is a limit to what a man can bear? For example, this man, if he had only two females in his house it would be all right, but if there would be 14, that would be too much, and therefore there must be some utilitarian consideration [that] would come in inevitably even in the kindest of men. [Laughter]. Ya. Ya, now?

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<sup>v</sup> In translation: “gentlefolk”

<sup>vi</sup> In translation: “gentlefolk”

<sup>vii</sup> In translation: “Well, well”

**Reader:** “The consequence was that capital was provided and wool purchased.” (II.7.12)

**LS:** This question is—Socrates has given very sound advice, it seems—the question is whether he was also helpful in getting the capital and the wool. That is not said, whether Aristarchus did it by himself, as I believe he did, or whether Socrates helped him do that. Yes?

**Reader:** “The women worked during dinner and only stopped at the supper hour. There were happy instead of gloomy faces—”

**LS:** [Laughter] Ya.

**Reader:**

suspicious glances were exchanged for pleasant smiles. They loved him as a guardian and he liked them because they were useful. [Laughter] Finally Aristarchus came to Socrates and told him this with delight. “One objection they have to me,” he added: “I am the only member of the household who eats the bread of idleness.” “Then why not tell them the story of the dog?” asked Socrates [laughter]. “It is said that when beasts could talk, a sheep said to her master: ‘It is strange that you give us sheep nothing but what we get from the land, though we supply you with wool and lambs and cheese, and yet you share your own food with your dog, who supplies you with none of these things.’ The dog heard this, and said: ‘Of course he does. Do not I keep you from being stolen by thieves, and being carried off by wolves? Why, but for my protection you couldn’t even feed for fear of being killed.’ And so, they say, the sheep admitted the dog’s claim to preference. Do you then tell these women that you are their watch-dog and keeper, and it is due to you that they live and work in safety and comfort, with none to harm them.” (II.7.12-14)

**LS:** There is one bad thing in the translation. At the beginning of paragraph 14 the dog says, “by Zeus.” [Laughter] That is another Xenophontic thing. The Platonic Socrates swears sometimes by the dog. [Laughter] Xenophon does not go beyond making a dog swear by Zeus. Now there is something else about this *logos tou kynòs*, the *logos* of the dog. Obviously Aristarchus is the dog and the relatives are the sheep. But who is master? Apparently, this whole group of people are in need of some “x” whom they must serve. That seems to be implied in this likeness. So this is the first one of these people, at least friends in the wider sense. I believe friend is used in different languages in different ways. If I remember well the German usage, that was much more restricted than the American usage. For example, to know a boy, someone with whom one has gone to school and lived in the same street and so on, and knows also, and remains in contact throughout one’s life, that would not have been called a friend in German. In America, I think it would be called a friend. So, and the question is: In what sense was Aristarchus a friend of Socrates? The question will become more clear in the sequel. Let’s turn to chapter eight.

**Reader:** “Again, on meeting an old comrade after long absence he said—” (II.8.1)

**LS:** Ya, after long absence. That’s, you know, not a constant companion.

**Reader:**

“Where do you come from, Eutherus?”

“I came home when the war ended, Socrates, and am now living here,” he replied. “Since we have lost our foreign property, and my father left me nothing in Attica, I am forced to settle down here now and work for my living with my hands. I think it's better than begging, especially as I have no security to offer for a loan.”

“And how long will you have the strength, do you think, to earn your living by your work?” (II.8.1-2)

**LS:** By the body, ya. That your body will be sufficient.

**Reader:**

“By Zeus,<sup>viii</sup> not long, of course.”

“But remember, when you get old you will have to spend money, and somebody [nobody in translation] will be willing to pay you for your labour.”

“True.”

“Then it would be better to take up some kind of work at once that will assure you a competence when you get old, and to go to somebody who is better off and wants an assistant, and get a return for your services by acting as his bailiff, helping to get in his crops and looking after his property.”

“I shouldn't like to make myself a slave, Socrates.” (II.8.2-4)

**LS:** In other words, he is very much concerned with his independence, with his self-sufficiency. Yes?

**Reader:** “But surely those who control their cities and take charge of public affairs are thought more respectable, not more slavish on that account.” (II.8.4)

**LS:** In other words, Socrates says: You say that it is slavish to serve, but the most respected members of the community are those who serve the *polis*, as if there were no difference between serving the *polis* and serving a private citizen. And surely, in the social estimation there is an enormous difference, but Eutherus does not go into that point, as you see. Yes?

**Reader:**

“Briefly, Socrates, I have no inclination<sup>ix</sup> to expose myself to any man's censure.”

“But, you see, Eutherus, it is by no means easy to find a post in which one is not liable to <sup>x</sup>censure. Whatever one does, it is difficult to avoid mistakes, and it is difficult to escape unfair criticism even if one makes no mistakes. I wonder if you find it easy to avoid complaints entirely even from your present employers.” (II.8.5)

**LS:** Simply stated, you want to be independent. Are you independent now? Yes?

**Reader:** “You should try, therefore, to have no truck with grumblers and to attach yourself to considerate masters; to undertake such duties as you can perform and beware of any that are too

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<sup>viii</sup> In translation: “Oh”

<sup>ix</sup> Here there is a break in the tape; the remainder of the passage was presumably read.

<sup>x</sup> The tape resumes at this point.

much for you, and, whatever you do, to give of your best and put your heart into the business. In this way, I think, you are most likely to escape censure, find relief from your difficulties, live in ease and security, and obtain an ample competence for old age.” (II.8.6)

**LS:** Yes. So here Socrates <sup>8</sup>gives another advice, but in this case we are not told whether the advice was taken. A more important consideration is this: Here was a man who lived, who earned his livelihood well enough for the time being, but what would happen to him in his old age? What about Socrates himself? Was he ever worried about how he would earn his bread in his old age? I think obviously not. And that means also there is a great difference between this “quote friend” and Socrates himself. This is the only chapter, by the way, here, in which nothing is said about the success of Socrates’ advice. <sup>xi</sup>In the two preceding chapters, seven and eight, there was nothing said as to the authenticity of the conversations, you know, by a remark [such as] “I have heard him say,” or so. But here now, in chapter nine and the beginning of chapter ten, they begin with the word “I know.” That is a kind of voucher in this sense, I mean, you must not take this in the massive sense in which a student of archives takes that. Yes?

**Reader:** I know<sup>xii</sup> that he once heard Criton say that life at Athens was difficult for a man who wanted to mind his own business. (2.IX.1)

**LS:** Yes, this is a formula which you know from Plato’s *Republic*, but which has here a somewhat more common meaning, and means Criton was not a political man. He just wants to lead a private life. And of Criton we have heard before he was one of the true associates of Socrates mentioned in Book 1, chapter two, paragraph 48. Yes?

**Reader:**

“At this moment,” Criton added, “actions are pending against me not because I have done the plaintiffs an injury, but because they think that I would sooner pay than have trouble.”

“Tell me, Criton,” said Socrates, “do you keep dogs to fend the wolves from your sheep?”

“Certainly,” replied Criton, “because it pays me better to keep them.”

“Then why not keep a man who may be able and willing to fend off the attempts to injure you?”

“I would gladly do so were I not afraid that he might turn on me.”

“What? don’t you see that it is much pleasanter to profit by humouring a man like you than by quarrelling with him? I assure you there are men in this city who would take pride in your friendship.” (II.9.1-3)

**LS:** Wait a moment. So what he suggests is that Criton should hire a counter-sycophant to keep the sycophants away from him. In this case, by the way, when Socrates uses this example here, likeness here, it is clear who would be the master. The counter-sycophant would be the dog, but the master would of course be Criton.

**Reader:** Thereupon they sought out Archdemus—

**LS:** *They.* Here in this case, Socrates joins in the search, that is his friendship.

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<sup>xi</sup> Here Strauss turns to chapter nine.

<sup>xii</sup> In translation: “remember”



**Reader:** “an excellent speaker and man of affairs, but poor. For he was not one of those who make money unscrupulously, but an honest man, and he would say that it was easy to take forfeit from false accusers.” (II.9.4)

**LS:** From sycophants, ya.

**Reader:** “From sycophants. So whenever Criton was storing corn, oil, wine, wool or other farm produce, he would make a present of a portion to Archedemus, and when he sacrificed, he invited him, and in fact lost no similar opportunity of showing courtesy. Archedemus came to regard Criton's house as a haven of refuge and constantly paid his respects to him. He soon found out that Criton's sycophants<sup>xiii</sup> had much to answer for and many enemies. He brought one of them to trial on a charge involving damages or imprisonment. The defendant, conscious that he was guilty on many counts, did all he could to get quit of Archedemus. But Archedemus refused to let him off—”

**LS:** Like a good dog, ya. Ya?

**Reader:**

until he withdrew the action against Criton and compensated him. Archedemus carried through several other enterprises of a similar kind; and now many of Criton's friends begged him to make Archedemus their protector, just as when a shepherd has a good dog the other shepherds want to pen their flocks near his, in order to get the use of his dog. Archedemus was glad to humour Criton, and so there was peace not only for Criton but for his friends as well. If anyone whom he had offended reproached Archedemus with flattering Criton because he found him useful, he would answer: “Which, then, is disgraceful: to have honest men for your friends, by accepting and returning their favours, and to fall out with rogues; or to treat gentlemen as enemies by trying to injure them, and to make friends of rogues by siding with them, and to prefer their intimacy?”

Henceforward Archedemus was respected by Criton's friends and was himself numbered among them. (II.9.4-8)

**LS:** Ya, hence Archedemus became one of Criton's friends and was honored by the other friends of Criton. Was he honored by Socrates? And even if he was, is he a friend in the same way in which Socrates could be a friend? That's a question. Xenophon does not call here Criton a friend. He simply tells the story of Criton without calling him a friend. Yes?

**Reader:** “And I also know<sup>xiv</sup> the following conversation between him and his companion Diodorus.” (II.10.1)

**LS:** Also, he doesn't use the term friend again. I would translate this by comrade to have a certain consistency.

**Reader:**

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<sup>xiii</sup> In translation: “false accusers”

<sup>xiv</sup> In translation: “Again I recall”

“Tell me, Diodorus,” he said, “if one of your servants runs away, do you take steps to bring him back safe?”

“Yes, of course,” he replied, “and I invite others to help, by offering a reward for the recovery of the man.”

“And further, if one of your servants is ill, do you take care of him and call in doctors to prevent him dying?”

“Indeed I do.”

“Well, suppose that one of your acquaintance, who is much more useful than your servants, is near being ruined by want, don't you think it worth your while to take steps to save him? Now you know that Hermogenes is a conscientious man and would be ashamed to take a favour from you without making a return. Yet surely it is worth many servants to have a willing, loyal, staunch subordinate, capable of doing what he is told, and not only so, but able to make himself useful unbidden, to think clearly and give advice. Good householders, you know, say that the right time to buy is when a valuable article can be bought at a low price [laughter]; and in these times the circumstances afford an opportunity of acquiring good friends very cheap.” [Laughter]

“Thank you, Socrates,” said Diodorus, “pray bid Hermogenes call on me.”

“No, indeed I won't,” “By Zeus I won't,”<sup>xv</sup> said he; “for in my opinion it is at least as good for you to go to him yourself as to invite him to come to you, and you have quite as much to gain as he by doing so.”

The consequence was that Diodorus set off to visit Hermogenes; and in return for a small sum he acquired a friend who made a point of thinking how he could help and please him either by word or by deed. (II.10.1-6)

**LS:** Yes. Now this is the only clear example of how Socrates helped his friends by telling them how they could help one another. You remember he made this distinction at the beginning of chapter seven: that he alleviated or he tried to alleviate the difficulties of his friends which came from ignorance by instruction, and those which came from need by teaching them how they should help one another. Here they help one another. Hermogenes is one of the true associates of Socrates, just as Criton was in the preceding chapter. But Socrates does it very delicately, in not advising Hermogenes to go to Diodorus but telling Diodorus to seek out Hermogenes. Hermogenes was the brother of the famous Callias, that fool, very wealthy, and who had this affair with Mrs. Ischomachus, as we may call her. But Hermogenes for one reason or the other was poor, and <sup>9</sup>he occurs, for example, in Plato's *Cratylus*. He is one of the characters. So these are [examples of] how Socrates behaved to his friends in the widest sense of the word, by *deed*, whereas the three preceding chapters showed how he encouraged people to become friends and to cherish friendship by speech.

**Student:** This reminds me a bit of . . . .

**LS:** I beg your pardon?

**Student:** This reminds me of Xenophon's *Banquet* a little bit, where Socrates speaks of himself as a procurer, as a match-maker, for things—

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<sup>xv</sup> “By Zeus, I won't” is not in the translation but supplied by the reader.

**LS:** No, Xenophon doesn't speak at the *Symposium*. Xenophon does not speak in [the] *Symposium*. So that is—and Socrates says this of Antisthenes.

**Student:** Of who?

**LS:** Of Antisthenes. And Antisthenes is indignant about this comparison, and Socrates then tries to explain to him that it is something very dignified and serious.

**Student:** What exactly were the times that made friends so cheap?

**LS:** How should I say? An economic crisis. It was a buyers' market for bailiffs, for other helps—that is, I do not know. There's no further indication when this was. In the other cases, one could possibly guess at a certain time—you know, when he speaks of the loss of the possessions of Athens and so on, one can assume that this was after the Peloponnesian War and so. But this is so unimportant for Xenophon's purposes.

**Student:** Didn't we learn before that the man is the one who goes out and makes or gathers the harvest, and the woman is the one who keeps it in the house. Is that right?

**LS:** Ya, but she uses it, ya?

**Student:** Well, the transition that's made here when the talking is now getting to be about how we're going to have some man who's going to keep things for another man, so he's going to take a position much like a woman. And then the next step is that there's going to be a man who's going to keep things for the state; and somehow keeping things for the state, instead of being like a woman, is very much a manly virtue. It's the virtue of the politician. But from what we learned in the *Oeconomicus*, it seems that the continued analogy suggests very much that that's the duty of a woman is to keep the things. And there's a time when the sheep would say to the dog, well, we only need a few dogs, we have too many, and we don't need so many ones just to keep the things in. Isn't there a possibility that the position of the politician is a very delicate balance depending upon how many are required given time?

**LS:** I do not quite follow you. I mean, you started from the simple thing: the husband is supposed to bring in the things and the woman to transform them into useful things. Bread baking, making flour or baking bread.

**Student:** Yeah, I'm thinking of Rousseau, in a certain sense. There's a time when the machinery of the society can—the machinery of the household can become too clogged up with useless women who sit around the house waiting to keep things and don't make anything themselves. So if the politician somehow is to the society, by means of these two analogies that are made, as the woman is in the household, there might come a time in a society when there are too many useless politicians, or bureaucrats as they say—I think as might be the case today, that are just bogging down and not making anything themselves.

**LS:** Ya, but I don't see a direct connection between—I see the two cases, but I don't see a direct connection between them.

**Student:** I think that the connection is a continued one, because the one case, the woman is keeping, then there's a man who keeps things for another man privately—he looks after his estate as a bailiff, then there's the man who keeps things for the state, which is the furthest case.

**LS:** Can someone help my—?

**Student:** Yeah, well, it seems to me that in the one case, there's storing, you know; one is a storing, and one is a guard. It seems to me they're rather different functions. If he were talking simply about treasurers, then there might be a clear analogy, but if he, by political men in general, I suppose they're supposed to be more, well, more like dogs than like wives.

**Different Student:** That is, they'll be more like guardians than like artisans.

**Student:** Yeah, more like guardians.

**Student:** I think there could be an excess of them too.

**LS:** Well, is there—would you like to bring up anything else regarding the subject friendship as presented by Xenophon? Yes?

**Student:** I just wondered if that's close to the thought of the story of the dog. Socrates says that he should tell them the story of the dog. But is it clear really that he serves, I mean, that that serves to answer their objection to the fact that he's idle? Presumably he does the work of the dog, but does he really do that work, or is this just to sort of persuade them to let him go on being an idler?

**LS:** Well, ya, well, without him, for example—ya, I see your question. But without his help they would have never gotten the capital and the wool, for example, on which they work.

**Student:** Could women not borrow money or—?

**LS:** Pardon?

**Student:** Couldn't women borrow money?

**LS:** Perhaps not as good. I mean, there are clever business women, I know that, but it's a more natural—at least according to former notion, it's more natural for a man to go out of the house and take care of these things. Yes?

**Student:** Mr. Strauss, is it possible that this is an example of the dog was chosen to indicate an example, to serve as an image of the state which never gets beyond certain most urgent functions . . . Say, directing someone to the most urgent political state of the city, that it never gets to the point where it's drawing out the virtue, the potential virtue of the citizen. That's why

he chooses the example of dogs. It seems to me that there are other examples he could have chosen . . . .

**LS:** Ya, the dog is used, as you surely know from the *Republic*, as a likeness of the political man. And you can easily see it when you look at a dog barking: that looks like a public accuser. And you cannot see a dog barking as a defender, can you? But he can defend in another way, but not by speech, so to speak, and that is the dog as protector, as protector of the house, is used as a likeness for the political man as a protector of the *polis*. And also this accusing comes in as an additional usefulness of this likeness.

**Student:** Well, I was sort of thinking that possibly in an ideal city that the function of the, of the ideal statesman would be something that the dog . . . do, and that <sup>10</sup>the example of the dog is brought up here with roughly, the statesman performs only the function of guarding of the city against attackers et cetera, the urgent functions of a political society in essence . . . .

**LS:** Yes, but what about the distributive function which the dog cannot fulfill? The dogs snatch whatever they have access to, but there is no individual dog who distributes dog food among the various dogs, and that would have to be regarded as an important political function. Today it is called allocation of values, ya? Of what?

**Student:** Resources.

**LS:** Resources, thank you very much. [Laughter] So that is, that would be more important, anyway. Mr. . . . .

**Student:** Yeah, I was wondering, you alluded and mentioned once in your answer to Mrs. Kaplan that the word friend is being used on at least three different levels, and you also indicated here that all of these analogies point to the kind of friendship that he's not talking about at great length, <sup>11</sup>the friendship of the master of the dog, but I just wonder from the point of view of Xenophon's strategy, just who is he writing for? You know, what sort of man has to be told about buying friends? What sort of audience or reader really has to have it made explicit to him that there is a kind of buying and selling of friends?

**LS:** Well, what is the purpose of the whole work? Is it a treatise of economics? Of buying and selling? No, no. The subject is to show the usefulness of Socrates, and one of the items of the usefulness of Socrates is how he was useful in regard to friendship, and in particular to his friends, and <sup>12</sup>the latter is shown by these four chapters. And against people who regarded Socrates as a very dangerous man and a very subversive character, <sup>13</sup>this is, you must admit, nothing subversive. You can say it is not very exciting <sup>14</sup>but you cannot possibly say this is a dangerous man who does these things. And this—I mean, this would fit this likeness, doesn't it . . . .

**Student:** Yeah, but, but that's not enough.

**LS:** No. Yes, I grant you that.

**Student:** No, and I just wonder—I mean, if you don’t want to answer it on the level of Xenophon, one can say, why did Socrates make so explicit the principles underlying this kind of friendship? In other words, what I have in mind is that this sort of thing, it seems to me, happens, this sort of thing that is being described here happens much, much more than is talked about. It’s really a much more common thing, and people don’t talk about it.

**LS:** No, this kind of thing, what do you mean by that?

**Student:** I mean this friendship on a mercenary basis.

**LS:** Ya, sure, sure. Ya, I think I agree fully with you. And therefore Xenophon devotes, you can say, a disproportionately large part to this kind of friendship but, I think, while making it clear that this is not the highest kind of friendship because this—to mention only one point—this longing for one another, you know?, longing for one another especially in absence, of course, that is here not necessarily presupposed. Ya? Longing. This, what Mrs. Kaplan calls “the sentiments,” that is not there. Yes. But still <sup>15</sup>the first usefulness of what Xenophon does is to show Socrates’ usefulness in order to counteract the bad view of Socrates entertained by many people. And indeed, that is not enough, and therefore he speaks also of the more *intimate* things. But of these more intimate things he speaks only in allusions. For instance, <sup>16</sup>this passage on Socrates’ blissful activity, which has to do with Socrates’ good friends, must never be forgotten for one moment when one reads these chapters. And I think even these chapters read by themselves would lead one to roughly such a hierarchy: <sup>17</sup>the mere business, mere utilitarian friendship; friendship of the gentlemen; friendship of Socrates and his people. And one might have to make some subdivisions, but <sup>18</sup>the main division would not be endangered by the subdivisions. Ya?

**Student:** Well, one of the things I had in mind was [that] if one thinks about what sort of person needs to learn about this sort of thing, it seems to me that he might be trying to educate young men who are in a certain way too nobly brought up so that they become blind in knowing how to deal with people who are not as noble as themselves.

**LS:** No. That may be so, but I believe something more obvious. Think of Benjamin Franklin, who was a great admirer of Xenophon. Now <sup>19</sup>in his *Autobiography*, he tells this story: a young man came to him and wanted to borrow money, and then Franklin said: No, I won’t give you money but I will teach you to shave, how to shave, because that way you will save lots of money and you will never be exposed to the stench of barbers. [Laughter] <sup>20</sup>Now something of this kind is happening here. Some people *need* that advice, surely, but one must also say [that] <sup>21</sup>these advices as given here are trivial as stated by themselves and must be seen in the broader context.

**Student (probably Mr. Klein):** Wouldn’t you say that, to ask the question about—well, it is written for people like Aristarchus, namely, people who read it and say: Yes, yes, yes.

**LS:** Right [laughing].

**Mr. Klein:** But it’s at the same time, written for people who laugh about it because it is very funny.

**LS:** Ya, ya. Absolutely.

**Mrs. Kaplan:** But Xenophon does not know that maybe, maybe that it is just—

**Mr. Klein:** Surely he knows that, Mrs. Kaplan.

**Mrs. Kaplan:** All right, then he knows, but nowhere he shows us that he knows something on the upper level. That's what he knows. He makes a kind of . . . the *Oeconomicus* maybe be read as a kind of comedy.

**LS:** Yes.

**Mrs. Kaplan:** Yes. Socrates is not a gentleman, is probably not a big knower of agriculture. The only answers with the gentlemen are very funny because he doesn't see the knowledge is not there, and Socrates, this Socrates, ignorant, and says: Yes, that I know, that there should be a hole, that tree should be here. Very funny, and we can read this all. This is comedy. It's comedy, it's parody.

**LS:** This book, the *Oeconomicus*, the *Oeconomicus* was used throughout antiquity and probably until the Renaissance inclusively as a book on farming. The Roman agricultural writers used him and changed him somewhat according to the Roman experiences, and that Cicero translated him.

**Mrs. Kaplan:** Yes, I read it, that in Cicero that . . . but here I cannot hold this is like a comedy.

**LS:** Ya, that is true.

**Mrs. Kaplan:** . . . If he knew this way—

**LS:** But Mrs. Kaplan, if you would say this in public, especially in the presence of classical scholars—

**Mrs. Kaplan:** They will laugh at me. . . .

**Mr. Klein:** Is that so?

**LS:** I just happened to read the last book, latest book on Xenophon by a classical scholar, an extremely learned man, and he knows not only the modern literature, the whole modern literature, which is enormous, but also <sup>22</sup>all classical literature which has any possible bearing, and the result is complete implicit denial that there is anything funny about these things. Isn't it?

**Mrs. Kaplan:** Mr. Strauss, but I understand Mr. Columbus<sup>xvi</sup>. If he did not know that this is funny, if he knew that . . . is funny [laughter]. This is true.

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<sup>xvi</sup> It is not certain that Mrs. Kaplan said "Columbus."

**Student:** . . . scholars. [Laughter]

**LS:** I didn't hear. What did he say?

**Student:** . . . because there are scholars.

**Mrs. Kaplan:** But this is not . . . for many, many centuries, to say somehow, suddenly, this ignorant Socrates, and this gentleman who doesn't know much about this subject himself. Both could be read in . . . . So I think you are right [that] he knows that this is comical, and that makes this . . . .

**Student:** But it is *both*, it is *both*. In fact, it is—for some people, it is something that is worthwhile considering, and they do consider that.

**Mrs. Kaplan:** To buy friends?

**Student:** Yeah, sure, to buy friends, and a that's a useful thought. And other people look at this, read that, and smile, smile, I wouldn't say—

**Mrs. Kaplan:** Smile.

**Student:** Isn't it that the people are being shown what happens? It was said at the beginning of this meeting—he said we are ignorant but our minds are filled with unexplicit opinions. We haven't been able to make these things explicit, and as we make them explicit, we are able, at least, to examine the opinions or prejudices that we have. And also perhaps—

**LS:** Yes, yes. In other words—yes, in other words—

**Student:** Although we examine this writing, we perhaps all buy friends, we don't know it . . . .

**LS:** And that would mean to ascend from Aristarchus, hopefully, to something like Xenophon.

**Student:** Because you realize it's making explicit something that you may not even know that you are doing.

**LS:** Yes, sure. Ya, that is true.

**Student:** I think it was suggested that there are no secrets in the *Republic*, and I think that in a certain sense there are no secrets in here.

**LS:** Absolutely.

**Student:** That what's being said here is right there for everyone to see . . . .

**LS:** Ya, but there are secrets for people who do not read carefully, for people completely cloaked with prejudices. If I may mention this point in reading this book on Xenophon, the first thing



which strikes me is [that] the overriding concern is: Where did Xenophon get this notion? I mean not what is it in itself, but did he get it from Antisthenes, or from I don't know whom, and writers of whom we know practically nothing? And there are big dogfights [laughter] about that. And the nicest thing, though, I found was what he said about chapter five of the *Oeconomicus*, the Persian chapter, and there he discusses very seriously whether this description of the Persian Empire and cooperation of the military and the civil governance, of the art of war and the art of farming, whether that was historically correct. And they said they know a few things about old Persia from, I do not know, the "Iranianists" probably, I suppose, knows something about it . . . . And then they could [say that] Xenophon doesn't make sense. He *errs*, as a German commentator once said. You know that story? Here Xenophon is mistaken.

I'll tell you the story. There was an editor of Goethe's letters, and in one of these letters Goethe is said to have said (I have never [read] all [the] letters, nor have I ever read this man, this man called Düntzer<sup>xvii</sup>)—Goethe said: This woman I loved more than any other. Düntzer said: Here Goethe is mistaken. [Loud laughter] That is called scholarship. [Laughter] Now we come—after we have been referred to many banal things—we come now in Book 3 to much graver matters, to people who are longing for the noble things, people entirely different from these. And this is possible, what Mr. Berns said: that this, the contrast between the people longing for the noble things and those friends here, is surely intended, ya. And we must see how Socrates could talk to *all* of these people, those who were only in dire need and didn't know how to feed their fourteen female relatives, and he could talk to ambitious young men who wanted to become generals and perhaps conquerors of the world. He could do all this.

**Student:** Mr. Strauss, can you say he could talk—you mean the Socrates in Plato?

**LS:** Here, too.

**Student:** But this is exactly what I . . . the tediousness here and the irony here seems to me to be misapplied, so that he knows that what he says, he is ironical. But it is so inadequate to what we know how Socrates talks in—

**LS:** What do we know?

**Student:** Just a second, how do we know? I'm speaking about Plato. That it is so, how should I say, so pedestrian.

**LS:** Ya, sure.

**Student:** . . . that one has really to prove these words, these are telegraphing, or else there are several places, which I don't know which it means, that he writes for the fool, for the . . . .

**LS:** Ya, but this is the trouble with all the people who think that Xenophon was just a retired colonel with a grave interest in horses and dogs—he rode horses also—but didn't understand anything seriously of Socrates: that there are always such sentences which <sup>23</sup>strike even the most

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<sup>xvii</sup> Johann Heinrich Joseph Düntzer (1813-1901).

superficial reader as marvelous, so that there is not such a universal tediousness, and boring, and so on. That is simply not true.

**Student:** You see, his irony is so obvious very often—that in order to understand that this is written for some people about whom Mr. Klein talked, and there is something beyond these people—

**LS:** Ya, well. But it appears from the book itself. Now when you come to the next chapter, you will see people longing for the noble things, and these are entirely different people.

**Student:** Yes, Mr. Strauss, let me say, I read the next chapter too. Even the description of the noble things is not as noble as—

**LS:** Ya, but you must admit that this is something very different—a young man who wants to become a general, and Socrates proves to possess the whole strategic art whereas the advice he gives to Aristarchus does not presuppose any quality of this kind.

**Student:** There's something indicative, maybe these quotations from literature might be interesting.

**LS:** He quotes sometimes—very rarely, he quotes. But very rarely.

**Student:** . . . . [laughter]

[end of tape]

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<sup>1</sup> Deleted “whether”

<sup>2</sup> Deleted “yeah, yes”

<sup>3</sup> Deleted “of the”

<sup>4</sup> Deleted “when here”

<sup>5</sup> Deleted “there is”

<sup>6</sup> Deleted “thinks”

<sup>7</sup> Deleted “of is there”

<sup>8</sup> Deleted “says”

<sup>9</sup> Deleted “occurs as”

<sup>10</sup> Deleted “that in”

<sup>11</sup> Deleted “would be”

<sup>12</sup> Deleted “and that is shown by these four”

<sup>13</sup> Deleted “that is”

<sup>14</sup> Deleted “or”

<sup>15</sup> Deleted “this, so”

<sup>16</sup> Deleted “this, that simple”

<sup>17</sup> Deleted “that”

<sup>18</sup> Deleted “this would”

<sup>19</sup> Deleted “he”

<sup>20</sup> Deleted “so and this”

<sup>21</sup> Deleted “there are”

<sup>22</sup> Deleted “what”

<sup>23</sup> Deleted “strike one”

## Session 16: no date

**Leo Strauss:** [in progress] —the chapters devoted to friendship, seven chapters of the Second Book, and we have come up against certain difficulties, as you may remember. And these difficulties will continue to be with us throughout the next section. You will see that very soon, I think. Now I think we should begin, unless there is someone here who would like to raise a question regarding the Second Book. Yes?

**Student:** Can we relate or characterize in any way . . . that progress from the second and third chapter, the conversation with his son, the conversation with the brothers in difficulty, up to friendship? Is it a kind of ascent, or there is a kind of necessary relationship involved between the two, the relatives and the friends?

**LS:** Well, you can say kinds of concentric circles, in a way: the man, his relatives, and his friends.

**Student:** Is that an ascent?

**LS:** That is hard to say because of the ambiguity of friends. I mean, if friends are people as the good friends of Socrates described in chapter six of the First Book, this would be something high. But if they are friends like that counter-sycophant—you know, you remember that?—or say, Aristarchus or Eutherus, then the friend is something rather low. That cannot be, I think there is no necessity to speak here up to now of a descent or for that matter an ascent. First, we had the plan of the indictment—piety, continence, and so on—and then afterward, from chapter two, Second Book on relatives, friends. And this belongs to a total division of man's, say, duties—[to] one's self, relatives, friends, the *polis*, you know? And we come now to the *polis*,<sup>1</sup> although not in these terms. Now if the *polis* is higher than the friends, then surely it would be an ascent, but that<sup>2</sup> is not yet settled. There are such things descents and ascents in Xenophon, even in the *Memorabilia*, but I think up till now we have not yet arrived to speak about that. Good. Now shall we turn to the Third Book? And let us only read the very first sentence first.

**Reader:** “I will now explain how he helped those who were eager to win distinction by making them qualify themselves for the honours they coveted.” (III.1.1)

**LS:** Those who long for the noble things. And these prove to be military or other political offices. This is a group of men distinguished from the friends, we know that from before—a friend is not necessary a politically ambitious man and vice-versa, so these are two different groups. One can even go so far as to say they are mutually exclusive in this, the Xenophontian scheme. Now this here, the sentence which we read, is a heading of the whole section following now, the whole seven chapters, and that is something we have not seen before. For example, the beginning of the friends section, beginning of chapter four, is only the beginning of chapter four. And by reading these chapters, we see that they deal with friends: there's no heading. Here there is one. Now of course even here this heading is not very clear, because the term—the longing for the noble things—means, more literally translated: longing for the noble ones, longing for the beautiful ones. And that can be something very different from political offices. For example, people who long for beautiful beloved ones are not politically ambitious people. So Xenophon to

some extent preserves here his intention to keep his plan disguised, if only slightly disguised here. But <sup>3</sup>here he comes closest to presenting a plan, and that is probably connected with the fact that here he speaks of the *polis*, and this is, if anything is public it is the *polis*. Now we can perhaps consider again later on this question of disguise in Xenophon, but we don't have to go into that now. Now one more point which we should remember as an opening for the Third Book, a characteristic of the friendship chapters as a whole: the preponderance of the low, superficially at least—friendship viewed as from a utilitarian point of view: the friend as a possession, as a useful possession, like a slave. And <sup>4</sup>we have seen various examples of that also especially in chapter 10, the last chapter, but others too. Now in Book 3 we can say we rise to a higher level: politically ambitious men, the *polis*. That seems to be beyond the realm of merely utilitarian consideration.

The chapter on the political offices<sup>5</sup>, or the section on political offices, consists also of seven chapters, just as the section on friendship. But there is one great difference which is indicated by the very first sentence. <sup>6</sup>Whereas there were some chapters in which Socrates urged on people toward friendship, here there is no urging on toward political office. Only those who longed for political office were urged by Socrates to <sup>7</sup>take the necessary steps, but he did not urge them on to strive for political office. Yes. Now let us go on, let us read the next sentence.

**Reader:** “He once heard that Dionysodorus had arrived at Athens, and gave out that he was going to teach generalship.” (II.1.1)

**LS:** Yes, so Socrates had heard of that. He had not met Dionysodorus. So that is an entirely different sphere in which Dionysodorus moves and in which Socrates moves. Yes?

**Reader:**

Being aware that one of his companions wished to obtain the office of general from the state, he addressed him thus:

“Young man, surely it would be disgraceful for one who wishes to be a general in the state to neglect the opportunity of learning the duties, and he would deserve to be punished by the state much more than one who carved statues without having—”

**LS:** Ya. I'm sorry.

**Reader:** “without having learned to be a sculptor.” (III.1.1-2)

**LS:** Yes. Now you see the status, of course, of the *polis*, but you see that is said two times and seemingly unnecessarily. He wanted, he longed for, this honor in the city. He wants to be a general in the city. What does this addition mean? This is not obvious, that a general is a general in the city. He is not likely to be elected by another city. Well, Xenophon's own history, his own fate shows that. One may be a leader of mercenary soldiers. That is an entirely different story. There, there is no question of election but only of finding some employment with the city or with some monarch, as Xenophon almost did. Ya, he said to one of the companions. Xenophon does not here vouch for the authenticity of the conversation by saying, “I heard him say” or something of this kind. Xenophon apparently was not present here. And <sup>8</sup>only on one occasion in these seven chapters does he vouch for the authenticity, whereas in the friendship chapters that was a

normal procedure. I state this as a fact, and we may perhaps try to think about the cause of the fact. Yes? The thought itself I believe is clear: the much greater responsibility in generalship than in sculpture, and therefore there should be much more of a punishable offense than to have any other employment without having learned it. It doesn't mean that an Athenian—in Athens it was a punishable offense to try to become a general if one had not a diploma in generalship. Most Athenian generals had not taken courses in generalship. This foreshadows the theme of this chapter. The polis, we may say, ought to require such a diploma. Hitherto it does not do it. Yes?

**Reader:** “For in the dangerous times of war the whole state is in the general's hands, and great good may come from his success and great evil from his failure. Therefore anyone who exerts himself to gain the votes, but neglects to learn the business, deserves punishment.” (III.1.3)

**LS:** Ya, would he, the question is, would he not justly be punished? But it is not said that they are in fact punished. Yes?

**Reader:**

This speech persuaded the man to go and learn.

When he had learnt his lesson and returned, Socrates chafed him. “Don't you think, sirs,” he said, “that our friend looks more ‘majestic,’ as Homer called Agamemnon, now that he has learnt generalship? For just as he who has learnt to play the harp is a harper even when he doesn't play, and he who has studied medicine is a doctor even though he doesn't practise, so our friend will be a general forever, even if no one votes for him. But your ignoramus is neither general nor doctor, even if he gets every vote. But,” he continued, “in order that any one of us who may happen—” (III.1.4-5)

**LS:** Let us here wait for one second, because that indicates the theme of this whole discussion. Socrates begins with a joke about the very looks of this young man. He looks now majestic, and like Agamemnon, because he has studied, has learned generalship, and this learning generalship, this knowing the art of generalship, this is the only legitimate title to generalship, not election, because <sup>9</sup>people who do not deserve to be elected are elected. Nor it seems even practice: if a man has learned medicine but doesn't use this knowledge by healing, for healing people, he's still a physician. The same would be true of the general. So if we take this seriously, by learning generalship and without ever having practiced generalship, one would be a general. And this would lead to very far-reaching consequences.

**Student:** Would it follow from that that by learning statesmanship without ever being a statesman one would be—?

**LS:** Ya. Ya, sure. In a way, that is what Socrates does when he says of himself, not in Xenophon but in Plato, that he is the only true statesman in Athens, this true statesmanship does not mean that he was ever—

**Student:** I hope that there's more to that argument than just that.

**LS:** Ya, there is much more. But one thing—does it not remind you of a very famous Socratic assertion: generalship is knowledge, period?

**Student:** At the beginning of the . . . well, virtue.

**LS:** Ya. Ya, sure, virtue is knowledge, which will <sup>10</sup>be discussed later on in the Third Book. But this is being prepared now. Yes?

**Student:** There doesn't seem to be any sign of where he learned generalship.

**LS:** It's Dionysodorus.

**Student:** Oh. Oh, pardon me, I see.

**LS:** One knows a bit of Dionysodorus through Plato's dialogue *Euthydemus*, where he appears together with his younger brother Euthydemus, and he is inferior to Euthydemus. That is also perhaps characteristic of Xenophon, that he picks the lower one of the two—you know, Dionysodorus and not Euthydemus.

**Student:** It seems that the kind of statesmanship that Socrates talks about in the *Statesman*, for example, with respect to—well, the idea of the Socratic statesman seems to be a non-functional statesman, a statesman that doesn't perform any political functions in this world, and it seems that the beautiful things, in that they are not evenly distributed among all the people, must come, if by knowledge, from those that have the knowledge. It seems that that consideration alone would be enough to invoke from those that have the knowledge some kind of almost moral imperative to use their knowledge. It's almost a moral imperative on the part of the few to act and not just think, just talk.

**LS:** You can say that, sure.

**Student:** So I'm not sure I understand the argument of the Socratic statesman, and I wonder if there's any more to it to substantiate that.

**LS:** I think there is probably much more. A provisional answer was given at the end of chapter six of the First Book. Socrates does not go into politics, but he enables as many as possible to become statesmen. By educating statesmen he does a greater service to the *polis* than by being a statesman, which means practically to have to be re-elected every year, as it was at that time in Athens, and probably also not re-elected the second time. So he is much more, he doesn't need election for what he is doing, for teaching statesman.

**Student:** Yeah, except we never see an example of him successfully educating a statesman and sending him into the field. All the ones that he talks to he either discourages or he unsuccessfully educates, and then they turn out to be tyrants. So he's apparently very unsuccessful all the way around in his endeavor to create—

**LS:** Ya, sure, and that is historically not quite correct. There was a man called Theramenes, who was quite respectable as a statesman but who characteristically does not appear as such in Xenophon or in Plato. I mean, in Xenophon's *Histories* he is mentioned, and indirectly one

knows that he was connected with Socrates. But surely in the main you are nevertheless right. Socrates did not—well, you can take another example. Socrates knew the economic art, as we have seen, the whole art of farming, and yet he was not a farmer, and he was not a householder, because apart from the knowledge you need also a motivation, as they say today, and Socrates did not have the motivation. Could this not apply here too? Then we would of course have to know the reason why he was not motivated, because at first glance, as you said, it would be his duty to be a statesman.

**Student:** I think that considering all the things that he seems to understand about the natural differences between men—

**LS:** Ya, surely that would reinforce your argument, understanding.

**Student:** I think so.

**LS:** Ya, I know. Then if this is so there would be very few top statesman, and all the greater the obligation on those who are by nature fitted for it to become the actual statesmen. Is that what you want to say?

**Student:** Well, or to say simply that if he's going to give an apology, I don't think it would have to be for the fact that he does philosophy, but it might be for the fact he does not do politics in the sense that he doesn't actually perform the political actions, nor is he successful in teaching people to do that. I think that's what he should apologize for.

**LS:** Yes, but you remember the reason which he gives in Plato's *Apology*, why he doesn't go into politics.

**Student:** No, not really.

**LS:** The *daimonion* prevents him. And he couldn't do anything against that. [Laughter]

**Student:** That's not much of an apology.

**LS:** Pardon?

**Student:** That's not much of an apology.

**LS:** Well, it all depends.

**Student:** In any sense. [Laughter]

**LS:** I mean, if you take Aristodemus' view and don't believe in the *daimonion*, then it is not good, but if you take the more obvious view and believe in it, then it's a good answer. But you would like to have a less mythical answer.

**Student:** I'd like to have a less evasive Socrates.

**LS:** Ya.

**Student:** I'd like to have a Socrates, if he thinks that there's something wrong with politics, and if he thinks that it would in some way spoil his life to dedicate a certain part of it to helping the ones around him who clearly will never be able to see the things that he sees, then I would like to have from him an explanation of why he feels that way.

**LS:** Yes, ultimately one would have to know the essence of the *polis*: whether there is something in that essence which makes it impossible for a man like Socrates to be politically active. Could this not be? Well, you have read, haven't you, Plato's *Republic*?

**Student:** Yeah, sure.

**LS:** Where this question is discussed at length.

**Student:** Yeah, I took the *Republic* more to be a dialogue about the relationship between certain kinds of men and <sup>11</sup>the structure of the human soul than a dialogue about politics. I thought there was very little politics in the *Republic*.

**LS:** But still there is enough there, and surely an answer to this question. And the answer of the *Republic* is very simple.

**Student:** There're different kinds of men.

**LS:** Ya, but not to this question we have now in mind. In a city, the philosopher will be politically active, in a city ruled by philosophers. But practically all cities are not ruled by philosophers, and he cannot function in a city not ruled by philosophers.

**Student:** Then he really does need not simply an apology but it seems that he needs a complete justification for his existence in the city, because he eats, he takes up room—

**LS:** Yes, yes. That's absolutely correct.

**Student:** And it's not simply a justification to show that his philosophy doesn't corrupt people. I mean, even if he could show that, that wouldn't be enough.

**LS:** Ya, but still, that is quite true. Regarding eating, one could perhaps say he did not eat very much, ya? [laughter], as Xenophon at least has said. And there are other considerations which would come in. Does he not, is he not very helpful to many citizens in their private capacities, and even in their public capacities, by giving them good advice? We have read such examples in the Second Book. Poor Aristarchus and his fourteen female relatives would have starved but for Socrates. Is this not useful?

**Student:** Yes. [Laughter]



**LS:** And many other things of this kind. So we—perhaps the city can afford a man who, from the city’s point of view, is rather marginal but does not inflict great harm on the city and is even somewhat useful. I’m speaking now on the assumption of the minimum. Well, we will come back to that. So at any rate, this young man, you see, he is nameless. He’s nameless. And in the next two chapters, by the way, the interlocutors are also nameless, and then in the four following chapters, they have names. And here one can say there is an ascent, because the nameless is in a way nothing, and whereas then <sup>12</sup>people with names. The first name is a fellow called Nichomachides, a name which contains victory in battle, a very significant name for a general. And then Pericles, the son of not the true Pericles, but [of] his son—but still, what an auspicious name. And then Glaucon, who was not a great statesman but who was a relative of Charmides and of Plato. So these are all very significant and there is an ascent here in this section, within this section. But ya, by the way, this question of the sculptor which Socrates gave [as] an example in paragraph three: Now, what would one do in the case of a sculptor? Because this question was explicitly discussed before. How would one distinguish between a good and bad sculptor? Would one say: <sup>13</sup>Who are your teachers? How many years have you studied [with] them? No, you would look at his works. So <sup>14</sup>if he does not produce works of sculpture, if he does not practice the art of sculpture, he is undistinguishable from a man who is not a—who has no knowledge of the art of sculpture at all. Perhaps something of this kind would apply to physicians and to generals too. Yes?

**Reader:**

“But,” he continued, “in order that any one of us who may happen to command a regiment or platoon under you may have a better knowledge of warfare, tell us the first lesson he gave you in generalship.”

“The first was like the last,” he replied; “he taught me tactics — nothing else.”

“But then that is only a small part of generalship. For a general must—” (III.1.5-6)

**LS:** Which means that the young man is not a general, and he does not deserve that Homeric epithet of majestic because he has learned only a small part of it, ya? That we know already. But now let’s go on.

**Reader:** “For a general must also be capable of furnishing military equipment and providing supplies for the men; he must be resourceful, active, careful, hardy and quick-witted; he must be both gentle and brutal, at once straightforward and designing, capable of both caution and surprise, lavish and rapacious, generous and mean, skillful in defense and attack; and there are many other qualifications, some natural, some acquired, that are necessary to one who would succeed as a general.” (III.1.6)

**LS:** Ya, more literally: many other things which he must have by nature and by knowledge. By knowledge—which means of course [that] knowledge is not enough. He must have a specific nature in addition to that. And now this addition, for example, he must have the quality of being, let us say, kind and, and cruel. Not every man is able to be cruel or for that matter to be kind. This is something, these contradictory qualities are essential to the general. Or does not knowledge here come in too? Must he not be kind in one set of circumstances and cruel in another set of circumstances? Must he not be able to discern the circumstances which call for kindness and those which call for cruelty? But if this is so, then knowledge rules, regulates these

qualities mentioned here. And while knowledge is not the whole, it is nevertheless ruling everything else in generalship and perhaps in other activities. The general must be able to alternate between these opposite qualities, and this alternation presupposes discernment, judgment, as a regulator. Does this remind you of another great man's assertion regarding such matters?

**Student:** Caesar.

**LS:** Caesar? Ya, but what did Caesar say about that?

**Student:** That he was cruel but could be kind.

**LS:** Ya, sure, so that would be only be an empirical confirmation of Xenophon's, I mean, of Xenophon's thesis. But I meant his thesis as such.

**Student:** Machiavelli, in chapter 16 of the *Prince*.

**LS:** Sure. Ya, more or less there.

**Student:** I think where he speaks of the centaur.

**LS:** The alternation—Machiavelli puts it in a more harsh way by speaking of an alternation between virtue and vice. But this alternation between moral virtue and moral vice, <sup>15</sup>this alternation itself must be regulated of course by prudence, as Machiavelli uses the word prudence; and this intelligent alternation, this is what Machiavelli calls virtue. So <sup>16</sup>this is another point where we are led to think of Machiavelli.

**Student:** In a way . . . .

**LS:** Pardon?

**Student:** In a way it also reminds one of the position of the dog in the *Republic*.

**LS:** Yes. I'll see, ya. Yes, that is true.

**Student:** Or the position of Odysseus' ship in the *Iliad*. That is, between Ajax and Achilles. Ajax being slow and ponderous but strong, in a way, and Achilles being rash and quick-witted but not as strong and . . . and Odysseus <sup>17</sup>alternating as the moment called for between the two qualities, never going too far into either one.

**LS:** But these are two different individuals. Here we speak of these qualities in one man.

**Student:** I think Homer is speaking in one man too, but he's illustrating it with the ships, to show the possibility for the movement between two extremes, between Ajax and Achilles. There's a, there's some path that a man can take.

**LS:** And who<sup>18</sup> in Homer has this alternation himself, this particular alternation?

**Student:** Odysseus. He has at the moment when he's going through the island of the Cyclops, he's like Achilles; and at other moments, when he's being battered by the waves, he's like Ajax. And sometimes he plays back and forth between them, such that he balances, and as the moment calls for it he takes the virtue or the vice that's necessary.

**LS:** Mmm. That makes sense.

**Mr. Williamson:** Isn't there something lacking in this account that is in the account of the dog in the *Republic*: namely, that the guardian who's like a watchdog in the *Republic* not only has to be able to be harsh and gentle by turns, but he also does this on the basis of a distinction between friends and enemies, which is related to the familiar and the unfamiliar? That is, one could say, taking it into the political, [that] he's patriotic. He's gentle towards his fellow citizens—or most of them at least—and harsh toward enemies. [There]<sup>19</sup> doesn't seem in this account of the general so far to be any basis on which he could distinguish who his friends are and who his enemies are. In other words, he might indeed be a mercenary, someone who could travel from city to city like Dionysodorus does, simply offering his services.

**LS:** Ya. Ya, but <sup>20</sup>is not the distinction implied? For example, where is he supposed to be rapacious, to rob, to steal, and so on? Not from his own people but from the enemy. I mean, so the distinction between friends and enemies is presupposed when you speak of generals, when you speak of war. And surely it is not sufficient because the general must also be harsh or cruel to his own subordinates, in the case of mutiny or . . . Well, the intention in the *Republic* with the dog is of course to indicate in a somewhat amusing way the crucial points of knowledge for the *polis*. Ya, but this is here not done, not as explicitly—in another way much more explicitly here, when the whole art of generalship is reduced to knowledge.

**Mr. Williamson:** Isn't that—I must say, I share Mr. Gary's difficulty there. For example, in the *Republic*, if one looks to knowledge alone, it's very difficult to tell the difference between a thief and a night watchman.

**LS:** Ya, ya. In the First Book.

**Mr. Williamson:** Yes, and there must—

**LS:** Ya, but later on that is the reason why they begin this foundation of the *polis*: in order to solve this difficulty.

**Mr. Williamson:** Well, that's what strikes me as missing in this particular account. That is, although—let's see, this is an unnamed companion—although he wishes to be a general in the city, Dionysodorus travels from city to city teaching an art which, presumably, as knowledge can be transferred. That is, there's no particular allegiance it points to.

**LS:** Ya. Ya, ya.

**Mr. Williamson:** Somehow the city has a particularity that goes further, that is in addition to the art of generalship; and that is [that] if a general is praised, I gather he's praised not only for his art but for his patriotism, and that seems to be absent here.

**LS:** Yes, that leads to more, to broader questions, which [were]<sup>21</sup> brought up before: patriotism, love of the fatherland, of the *patris* in Greek. Now the word *patris* occurs rather rarely in Xenophon, in the *Memorabilia*. And we have seen it occurred in the Heracles chapter—you remember, in II.1, where the question came up: Who, what is Heracles' fatherland? And that depends on who his father was. And this is an unanswerable question. Heracles could be interested in *any* city, but the followers of Heracles, they all would come from a determinate city and belong to it. Now, here there is nothing said of the fatherland. As a matter of fact, the first four chapters are silent on that subject, and then it comes out. So for a complete picture of the *polis*, one has—and <sup>22</sup>of generalship in particular, one surely has to take this into consideration. But as is indicated, as you yourself said, by such an individual as Dionysodorus, a man who possesses the art of a general <sup>23</sup>does not necessarily belong to any city. This knowledge is in its essence transferable from one city to the other, and that will come to the fore gradually here.

**Student:** And yet it's necessary that a general, if [his]<sup>24</sup> acts always ally him with this city or that city, that is, his art doesn't seem to provide him the basis for, at least, doesn't provide him all of the basis of his action. There has to be something else which, whatever it may be—profit, patriotism, or whatever—which puts him in the service—

**LS:** Ya, but is this not connected with the fact that generalship is a ministerial art? And there is a higher art which tells the general who is an enemy and who is a friend, the political art proper. And if you think of a man who's driven only by gain, and a condottiere—nothing else—well, then, it is subordinate to the economic art, you know? It is his way of earning a living. And the strategic art would minister to his desire to earn a living. But at any rate, it is clear that generalship is not *simply* knowledge. Yes?

**Reader:**

“It is well to understand tactics too; for there is a wide difference between right and wrong disposition of the troops, just as stones, bricks, timber and tiles flung together anyhow are useless, whereas when the materials that neither rot nor decay, that is, the stones and tiles, are placed at the bottom and the top, and the bricks and timber are put together in the middle, as in building, the result is something of great value, a house, in fact.”

“Your analogy is perfect, Socrates,” said the youth; “for in war one must put the best men in the van and the rear, and the worst in the centre, that they may be led by the van and driven forward by the rearguard.”

“Well and good, provided that he taught you also to distinguish the good and the bad men. If not, what have you gained by your lessons? No more than you would have gained if he had ordered you to put the best money at the head and tail, and the worst in the middle, without telling you how to distinguish good from base coin.”

“I assure you he didn't; so we should have to judge for ourselves which are the good men and which are the bad.” (III.1.7-9)

**LS:** It is now perfectly clear that Dionysodorus is not a general, and still less our young friend. Ya.

**Reader:**

“Then we had better consider how we may avoid mistaking them.”

“I want to do so,” said the youth.

“Well now,” said Socrates, “if we had to lay hands on a sum of money, would not the right<sup>i</sup> arrangement be to put the most covetous men in the front?”

“I think so.”

“And what should we do with those who are going to<sup>ii</sup> face danger? Should our first line consist of the most ambitious?”

“Oh yes: they are the men who will face danger for the sake of glory. About these, now, there is no mystery: they are conspicuous everywhere, and so it is easy to find them.”

(III.1.10)

**LS:** There is a question here. In one case are the lovers of money, and in the other case the lovers of honor or distinction. But the latter are introduced by reflection on who are willing, what kind of men are willing to undergo risks. Can not the lovers of money, prompted by a great desire for money, be willing to undergo great risks? I believe that’s possible. And I believe Xenophon also thinks of that. Yes?

**Reader:**

“But,” said Socrates, “did he teach you only the disposition of an army, or did he include where and how to use each formation?”

“Not at all.”

“And yet there are many situations that call for a modification of tactics and strategy.”

“I assure you he didn’t explain that.”

“Then pray go back and ask him. If he knows and has a conscience, he will be ashamed to send you home ill-taught, after taking your money.” (III.1.11)

**LS:** Well, of course he doesn’t say anything of conscience. If he knows and is not impudent, he will be ashamed after having taken money to send you away without that knowledge. Why does he say impudent? Would he not be—rather, would it not be more simple to say unjust? Well, I think, as a general as defined before, he wouldn’t be simply just. You have seen he must be a thief and so on. He couldn’t be, that wouldn’t make sense. In addition, Socrates does not consider the possibility that he might not know it or, more precisely, that he might ever return the money. That’s out of the question. That is Dionysodorus—there is one point here. Pardon? What did I hear? Socrates obviously knows more of strategy than Dionysodorus, so he could have given instruction in the strategic art. He does not,<sup>25</sup> though. He sends the boy away. But he does give instruction in the economic art, in a peaceful art. And <sup>26</sup>that throws a certain light on Socrates. Now if he possessed the knowledge which a general needs, he was a general without ever having practiced it and without ever having desired to be a general. Desired to be a general. This we must of course keep in mind.

<sup>i</sup> There is a break in the tape here; the text is supplied from the translation.

<sup>ii</sup> The recording resumes at this point.

There is one point to which I would like to draw your attention, and that is line 19, in the last paragraph. That doesn't appear, of course, in the translation. There is a Greek word which occurs here: *agein*, leading. And some manuscripts have *legein* instead (III.1.11). "Not everywhere must one *speak* in this manner;" namely, the best things in front or in the rear, and the worst things in the middle. But wholly apart from this variant reading, there is something of this rule of putting the best foot forward, and also the best man in the rear, and the low things, the unreliable poor things in the middle. That is also a principle of rhetoric. In forensic rhetoric especially, it was a rule that you bring in front the arguments which speak powerfully for the defendant and towards the end also such arguments, but the weak arguments in the middle, where the attention of the listeners is flagging. And we have observed frequently here Xenophon's use of the center—say, in the enumeration of the centrally mentioned thing—for indicating the most important. And the question would of course be: How can the most important be the weakest? Now from the point of view of the defendant as well as of the public prosecutor, obviously the weakest arguments<sup>27</sup> which could be made by the defense are the most important. Something of this kind happens here too: the weakest things—namely, those which are least acceptable to men in general—<sup>28</sup>these weakest things are the most important things. Does it not make sense?

**Student:** The words . . . tactics and strategy—are certainly very bad words . . . but tactics and strategy—

**LS:** <sup>29</sup>Sure. Ordering, ya. Ya, this is . . . comes from—ya, good. So this is, this then the first of the men desiring to be honored. Socrates <sup>30</sup>sends him to Dionysodorus and sends him back to him. That is [an] act friendly to the city. Whether it works in this case, that's another matter. Now let us turn to the second chapter.

**Reader:**

One day when he had met a man who had been chosen general, he asked him, "For what reason, think you, is Agamemnon dubbed 'Shepherd of the people' by Homer?<sup>iii</sup> Is it because a shepherd must see that his sheep are safe and are fed, and that the object for which they are kept is attained, and a general must see that his men are safe and are fed, and that the object for which they fight is attained, or, in other words, that victory over the enemy may add to their happiness?" (III.2.1)

**LS:** So let us stop here. Ya, that doesn't bring out the key point, that the object for the sake of which they campaign be achieved. But they campaign however . . . meaning: this is the object of the campaign, whereas in the case of the sheep, he did not say what the object is because that would unbalance the whole thing. The sheep are taken care of in order to be *eaten*, and this would then be awkward to apply this notion to the soldiers, you see—<sup>31</sup>subordinates should be served up to the general. Here we have an elected general, so not like the young man who wished in the future to become elected. This is the most—here, in this chapter, we have the most general statement about generalship which occurs in this work. Yes?

**Reader:** "Or what reason can Homer have for praising Agamemnon as "both a good king and a doughty warrior too"?<sup>iv</sup>" (III.2.2)

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<sup>iii</sup> Homer, Iliad II.243

<sup>iv</sup> Homer, Iliad III.179

**LS:** Ya, he quotes here a verse from the *Iliad*. And in the former, in the preceding chapter, he also quoted from the *Iliad*. These are the only quotations from the *Iliad* which occur in this work, <sup>32</sup>whereas in the section on friendship, there was a reference to the *Odyssey*. Ya?

**Reader:**

“Is it that he would be ‘a doughty warrior too’ not if he alone were a good fighter, but if he made all his men like himself; and ‘a good king’ not if he merely ordered his own life aright, but if he made his subjects happy as well? Because a king is chosen, not to take good care of himself, but for the good of those who have chosen him; and all men fight in order that they may get the best life possible, and choose generals to guide them to it. Therefore it is the duty of a commander to contrive this for those who have chosen him for general. For anything more honourable than that is not easy to find, or anything more disgraceful than its opposite.”

By these reflections on what constitutes a good leader he stripped away all other virtues, and left just the power to make his followers happy. (III.2.2-4)

**LS:** Yes. You must have noticed the transition from the direct speech of Socrates to the indirect speech, Xenophon’s narration in the last sentence. <sup>33</sup>I believe here one can understand that. Now what is the main point he makes here? The general or the king is chosen <sup>34</sup>not only for his own happiness but also for the happiness of the subjects. Clear. But when we come to the end, we see he drops completely the king’s own happiness. The king is chosen exclusively for the sake of the happiness of his subjects. And then here he speaks, he says: it is not easy to find anything more noble than that. It is not easy, that means; it is possible, but difficult. So there is something more noble, and that may have something to do with this particular thing: that the happiness of the king is irrelevant. Only the happiness of the subjects counts. Let us compare that with Socrates in *the* passage dealing with Socrates’ bliss, in the sixth chapter of the First Book. I think we should look at it. I.6.14.

**Reader:**

“That is my own view, Antiphon. Others have a fancy for a good horse or dog or bird: my fancy, stronger even than theirs, is for good friends. And I teach them all the good I can, and recommend them to others from whom I think they will get some moral benefit. And the treasures that the wise men of old have left us in their writings I open and explore with my friends. If we come on any good thing, we extract it, and we set much store on being useful to one another.”

For my part, when I heard these words fall from his lips, I judged him to be a happy man himself and to be putting his hearers in the way of being gentlemen. (I.6.14)

**LS:** Ya, well, he uses here a different word for happiness—*makários*, but let us disregard that. But here Socrates is happy. What about his hearers? He leads them to perfect gentlemanship and that is not clear whether they are happy. The word is truly not applied to them. Here he does exactly the reverse in the political sphere. The leader, if we can compare Socrates to a leader, the leader is concerned exclusively with the happiness of the led and in no way with his own happiness. This is an indication of the problem. Of course the question arises: What induces a man to wish to become a leader, if this is nothing, if ruling is nothing but serving and a complete forgetting of oneself? In this chapter, these difficulties which we have here are connected with

the fact that here he is completely silent on knowledge, whereas knowledge was a great theme of the preceding chapter. So the dubious status of knowledge in generalship and in this whole sphere, that is, properly elaborated, the reason why Socrates is not a political man.

**Student:** If Socrates had to go around putting his hearers in the way of being gentleman, and in that sense he has an influence like a politician's influence over groups of people but he doesn't function in the organized political structure of the society, he functions as sort of a free agent going around putting people in the way of being gentleman. So it seems that in a certain sense he's ignoring the political structure as the society is formed; that is, the one that men for the most part recognize, and he's creating his own among the ones that he comes in contact with.

**LS:** Yes—

**Student:** What I want to know is, what happens if the one interferes with the other? Then doesn't he have to go put on his tunic and go out to the public square and say something about it?

**LS:** Yes. So, ya, yes—that is, you are surely right. In other words, there are two societies: the one is the *polis* and the other is that of Socrates and his companions.

**Student:** The ones that he picks from the *polis*?

**LS:** His companions, the two overlap, the two societies. Socrates has companions who are not Athenians, for example, and of course not all Athenians are companions of Socrates. But above all they have different principles, different reasons, why they are: the *polis* on the one hand, and the Socratic circle on the other. Since they have such different principles, there is a possibility of conflict.

**Student:** Yeah.

**LS:** Sure, ya.

**Student:** As in China. I mean, there are many examples of societies in which a philosopher or his group, in which he would like to be a kind of statesman, are simply not left alone, and if he wants to be a statesman even in an esoteric sense, even with a special group of people, every once in a while he has to go out among the whole society and defend himself, defend his position, otherwise he simply will not be left alone.

**LS:** Yes, <sup>35</sup>that is true, but there is one difficulty: Assuming that what I called his principle is unintelligible to the *polis*, how can he defend himself?

**Student:** He has to learn to speak their language.

**LS:** Ya. Then he must translate his proper expression of his principle into an expression which is not quite appropriate, but <sup>36</sup>he cannot defend it on its own terms.



**Student:** No, and if he gets killed trying to, there's really not much that he can say about it. He does have an obligation to learn how to speak their language, otherwise he's just like a little child. Society is kind of like a parent and leads him around by the hand. He's in the democracy where he hopes that people will leave him alone, but if they don't, if they come and throw him in jail, there isn't anything he can say because he didn't take his position as a *man* in the society in which he primarily existed.

**LS:** Yes, but I'm afraid one can also turn it around and say [that] the other people are the children and Socrates is the man. More mature than the others.

**Student:** But only if one's on a level to see what Socrates is doing. But for the most part, people are not that way, and I think it's necessary for—I think when two people meet who don't speak the same language, it's always the obligation of the more intelligent one to learn the language of the less intelligent.

**LS:** Yes, all right.

**Student:** To speak to him.

**LS:** But the difficulty of which I spoke is not disposed of, because what Socrates means cannot be expressed in the other language—or if he uses the words and if they use the words, they mean something very different. Well, I think in our time the people speak of “doing philosophy.” Did you ever hear that expression?

**Student:** Yeah.

**LS:** And of intellectuals. Did you ever hear that?

**Students:** Yeah.

**LS:** And of ideologies. Well, can one express what philosophy is about in this language?

**Student:** I don't think so.

**LS:** Ya, well. And so only today, for the time being, in the West there is no possible bloody conflict between the state and philosophy.

**Student:** That's by chance.

**LS:** Not altogether. <sup>37</sup>The modern state is, was, constructed in order to prevent such conflicts. Did you ever hear of toleration? Good. And the toleration which was meant primarily for people of different religious views by an almost inevitable extension comprised also the philosophers.

**Student:** Good luck.

**LS:** Pardon?

**Student:** That's good luck.

**LS:** Ya, in an ultimate sense, yes. Ya, all right.

**Student:** It could change.

**LS:** Yes, yes. This does not mean, by the way, that <sup>38</sup>something is good luck because it can be changed. If you—this table [LS knocks on table] was made by an artisan, not accidentally, and yet it can be changed.

**Student:** Yeah, yes.

**LS:** Now let us turn to the next chapter.

**Reader:** “Again, when someone had been chosen a leader of cavalry, I remember that Socrates conversed with him in the following manner—” (III.3.1)

**LS:** Ya, he is again an elected man. Ya? An elected man. And this “I know” is the only voucher for authenticity occurring in this whole section. Yes?

**Reader:**

“Young man,” he said, “can you tell us why you hankered after a cavalry command? I presume it was not to be first of the cavalry in the charge; for that privilege belongs to the mounted archers; at any rate they ride ahead of their commanders even.”

“True.”

“Nor was it to get yourself known either. Even madmen are known to everyone.”

“True again.” (III.3.1)

**LS:** So here the question of the motivation of the ruler or the potential ruler is explicitly raised. Yes?

**Reader:**

“But perhaps you think you can hand over the cavalry in better condition to the state when you retire, and can do something for the good of the state as a cavalry leader, in case there is any occasion to employ that arm?”

“Yes, certainly,” said he.

“Yes,” said Socrates, “and no doubt it is a fine thing if you can do that. The command, I presume, for which you have been chosen, is the command of horses and riders.”

“Indeed it is.”

“Come then, tell us first how you propose to improve the horses.”

“Oh, but I don't think that is my business. Every man must look after his own horse.”

“Then if some of your men appear on parade with their horses ailing or suffering from bad feet or sore legs, others with underfed animals that can't go the pace, others with restive brutes that won't keep in line, others with such bad kickers that it is impossible to

line them up at all, what will you be able to make of your cavalry? how will you be able to do the state any good with a command like that?"

"I am much obliged to you," he replied, "and I will try to look after the horses carefully." (III.3.2-4)

**LS:** So we see this commander of cavalry was elected but he should not have been elected, ya? Yes?

**Reader:**

"Won't you also try to improve the men?" said Socrates.

"I will."

"Then will you first train them to mount better?"

"Oh yes, I must, so that if anyone is thrown he may have a better chance of saving himself."

"Further, when there is some danger before you, will you order them to draw the enemy into the sandy ground where your manoeuvres are held, or will you try to carry out your training in the kind of country that the enemy occupy?"

"Oh yes, that is the better way."

"And again, will you pay much attention to bringing down as many of the enemy as possible without dismounting?"

"Oh yes, that too is the better way."

"Have you thought of fostering a keen spirit among the men and hatred of the enemy, so as to make them more gallant in action?"

"Well, at any rate, I will try to do so now."

"And have you considered how to make the men obey you? Because without that horses and men, however good and gallant, are of no use."

"True, but what is the best way of encouraging them to obey, Socrates?"

"Well, I suppose you know that under all conditions human beings are most willing to obey those whom they believe to be the best. Thus in sickness they most readily obey the doctor, on board ship the pilot, on a farm the farmer, whom they think to be most skilled in his business."

"Yes, certainly."

"Then it is likely that in horsemanship too, one who clearly knows best what ought to be done will most easily gain the obedience of the others." (III.3.5-9)

**LS:** So here the subject of knowledge comes up, ya? Knowledge is not the sole, but the decisive type. At least the reputation for knowledge in this respect. Yes?

**Reader:**

"If then, Socrates, I am plainly the best horseman among them, will that suffice to gain their obedience?"

"Yes, if you also show them that it will be safer and more honourable for them to obey you."

"How, then, shall I show that?"

"Well, it's far easier than if you had to show them that bad is better than good and more profitable."

“Do you mean that in addition to his other duties a cavalry leader must take care to be a good speaker?”

“Did you suppose that a commander of cavalry should be mum? Did you never reflect that all the best we learned according to custom — the learning, I mean, that teaches us how to live — we learned by means of words—”

**LS:** Speech. Speech. Ya.

**Reader:**

“and that every other good lesson to be learned is learned by means of speech [“words” in translation]; that the best teachers rely most on the spoken word and those with the deepest knowledge of the greatest subjects are the best talkers? Did you never reflect that, whenever one chorus is selected from the citizens of this state—for instance, the chorus that is sent to Delos—no choir from any other place can compare with it, and no state can collect so goodly a company?”

“True.”

“And yet the reason is that Athenians excel all others not so much in singing or in stature or strength, as in love of honour, which is the strongest incentive to deeds of honour and renown.”

“True again.”

“Then don't you think that if one took the same pains with our cavalry, they too would greatly excel others in arms and horses and discipline and readiness to face the enemy, if they thought that they would win glory and honour by it?”

“I expect so.”

“Don't hesitate then, but try to encourage this keenness among the men: both you and your fellow-citizens will benefit by the results of your efforts.”

“Most certainly I will try.” (III.3.10-15)

**LS:** So here the benefit of the leader *too* is given because the question of the motivation of the leader is answered, and that motivation is a love of honor or glory or distinction. We see again that knowledge alone is not enough. We must at least have in addition the capacity to articulate one's knowledge—to speak, to converse. Yes, I think there is—he made a distinction in paragraph 11: the things which we learn by law that they are most noble, and other pieces of learning. The things <sup>39</sup>of which we have learned by law that they are most noble are the things through which we understand how to live. The other subjects of which we do not know by law that they're most noble, of these subjects nothing is said. Xenophon himself wrote a treatise on the art of the cavalry commander, and he understood this art, obviously. One cannot bear to say more about it <sup>40</sup>because Xenophon was never elected cavalry commander by the Athenians. Yes. Let us turn to the next chapter unless you <sup>41</sup>would like to raise a question. Yes?

**Student:** You pointed out in the first chapter that the—where Socrates was considering what kinds of men would take risks in war—that it seems as if people who were interested in money could also be, could be expected to take great risks or risk their lives. I didn't understand, though, why only people who were interested in glory and people who are interested in money are mentioned as people who would be willing to take great risks. I mean, there are other things people fight for and are willing to die for.

**LS:** Yes, that is a good question, but remember the chapters on friendship and the utilitarianism which we observed there. This <sup>42</sup>is effective probably here, too. So the noble things are pushed back and there is a doctrine supporting this act, and that is the noble is identical with the good. And the good means here the useful. Now if this is so, then there is no independent consideration of the noble. That is the basis, and this equation will be discussed later on in this book, after the completion of the political chapters. So, and if any evidence were needed, you would find it in the next chapter. Let's turn again.

**Reader:**

Once on seeing Nicomachides returning from the elections, he asked, "Who have been chosen generals, Nicomachides?"

"Isn't it like the Athenians?" replied he; "they haven't chosen me after all the hard work I have done, since I was called up, in the command of company or regiment, though I have been so often wounded in action" (and here he uncovered and showed his scars); "yet they have chosen Antisthenes, who has never served in a marching regiment nor distinguished himself in the cavalry and understands nothing but money-making." (III.4.1)

**LS:** Yes. Now this—so he is elected general. <sup>43</sup>We see that. Socrates was not present at the election. He was not present in the Assembly. He only asked Nicomachides what has happened there. Now Nicomachides, as you will see, <sup>44</sup>as you have seen, is very indignant about the choice of the Athenians and Socrates defends that choice. By doing so he defends the Athenians. He defends the established order. That <sup>45</sup>one must consider, because he does not in every respect do that. We see here, by the way, that—<sup>46</sup>in passing from what Nicomachides mentions—Antisthenes was a knight—you know?—a horseman, which belonged to a higher social group than the hoplites—the heavy armed infantry. Yes?

**Reader:**

"Isn't that a recommendation," said Socrates, "supposing he proves capable of supplying the men's needs?"

"Why," retorted Nicomachides, "merchants too are capable of making money, but that doesn't make them fit to command an army."

"But," cried Socrates, "Antisthenes also is eager for victory, and that is a good point in a general. Whenever he has been choragus, you know, his choir has always won."

"No doubt," said Nicomachides, "but there is no analogy between the handling of a choir and of an army."

"But, you see," said Socrates, "though Antisthenes knows nothing about music or choir training, he showed himself capable of finding the best experts in these."

"In the army too, then," said Nicomachides, "he will find others to command for him, and others to do the fighting." (III.4.2-4)

**LS:** Ya, let us stop here for a moment. According to Socrates, a good general is a man good at finding the officers and the soldiers, the good soldiers. He does not have to have expert knowledge in military matters, fighting and tactics. From this point of view, Socrates might very well be a general because, as you see for example in *Oeconomicus* II.16, he was always looking around in Athens who was most qualified in the various arts. And so he knew these people. Ya?

**Reader:**

“But, you see,” said Socrates, “though Antisthenes knows nothing about music or choir training, he showed himself capable—” Oh, I beg your pardon. “And therefore,” said Socrates, “if he finds out and prefers the best men in warfare as in choir training it is likely that he will be victorious in that too; and probably he will be more ready to spend on winning a battle with the whole state than on winning a choral competition with his tribe.”

“Do you mean to say, Socrates, that the man who succeeds with a chorus will also succeed with an army?”

“I mean that, whatever a man controls, if he knows what he wants and can get it he will be a good controller, whether he control a chorus, an estate, a city or an army.” (III.4.5-6)

**LS:** Ya, a household. A chorus or a household or a city or an army. So you see here knowledge is not sufficient. He must also be able to get these things. Why was Antisthenes able to get these things? Because he had wealth. So that is another point in addition to knowledge that has to be considered. Yes. Now Socrates will go on and enlarge this subject by speaking no longer of a chorus<sup>47</sup>, a *choragus*, a leader of a chorus, as an alternative to a *strategos*, a leader of an army, but of the leaders of any association—be it the chorus, be it the household, the *polis*, or an army. Yes?

**Reader:**

“Really, Socrates,” cried Nicomachides, “I should never have thought to hear you say that a good business man would make a good general.” (III.4.7)

**LS:** Yes. Now Nicomachides is quite surprised about this assertion. The good presidents of choruses are silently dropped and Antisthenes, the man elected, is an undeniably good householder. So if these two arts—strategy and householding—are identical, Antisthenes is of course a good army leader.

**Reader:**

“Come then, let us review the duties of each that we may know whether they are the same or different.”

“By all means.” “Is it not the duty of both to make their subordinates willing and obedient?”

“Decidedly.”

“And to put the right man in the right place?”

“That is so.”

“I suppose, moreover, that both should punish the bad and reward the good.”

“Yes, certainly.”

“Of course both will do well to win the goodwill of those under them?”

“That is so.”

“Do you think that it is to the interest of both to attract allies and helpers?”

“Yes, certainly.”

“And should not both be able to keep what they have got?”

“They should indeed.”

“And should not both be strenuous and industrious in their own work?”

“All these are common to both; but fighting is not.”

“But surely both are bound to find enemies?”

“Oh yes, they are.”

“Then is it not important for both to get the better of them?”

“Undoubtedly; but you don't say how household [“business” in the Loeb] capacity will help when it comes to fighting.”

“That is just where it will be most helpful. For the good householder [business man], through his knowledge that nothing profits or pays like a victory in the field, and nothing is so utterly unprofitable and entails such heavy loss as a defeat, will be eager to seek and furnish all aids to victory, careful to consider and avoid what leads to defeat, prompt to engage the enemy if he sees he is strong enough to win, and, above all, will avoid an engagement when he is not ready.” (III.4.7-11)

**LS:** Yes. Now that doesn't [show in]<sup>48</sup>—our translation—<sup>49</sup>how Socrates achieved this victory. Nicomachides had said, quite plausibly (but there is this enormous difference between the householder and the general) that the householders do not do battle, do not shoot. And it is not of the essence of householding, I don't think. And Socrates says: But don't the householders have enemies? In Greek, *echthroí*. That means private enemies. Of course, that they have; and then a transition is made from these private enemies—*echthroi*—to the *polemioi*, the enemies of the city and therefore the identification or quasi-identification of the two arts is made. You will see, by the way, that the economist needs the virtue of a man as it was described in chapter six of the Second Book: surpassing his friends in helping them and surpassing the enemies in harming them. Now, and we have observed that Socrates does not have *that* virtue, and perhaps that is a reason why Socrates can never be a general and can never go into politics.

**Student:** It seems like the art of the man who could be a general or who could go into politics or who could run a chorus would be, in a sense, the art of an efficiency expert. That is, if efficiency means the ability to get a group of people to dedicate themselves in a manner that is most propitious for the outcome to whatever they're doing, then it seems that whatever it is—whether it's knowable or whether it's some kind of quantity of something that a man can have—it seems to be that which enables a man to be a successful general and a successful chorus leader for the same reason.

**LS:** Yes, indeed. It is today easily intelligible, but in former times that was very paradoxical, what Socrates says here. Today you can have these efficiency experts regardless of the field in which the efficiency is sought.

**Student:** I wasn't really meaning to bring him down to that level—

**LS:** No. No, no. That is not—I think that is very pertinent because <sup>50</sup>there is a connection, a long connection, between what Socrates says here and what we see around us today.

[end of tape]

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<sup>1</sup> Deleted “now”

<sup>2</sup> Deleted “is, we”

<sup>3</sup> Deleted “that”

- 
- 4 Deleted "that"
  - 5 Deleted "has"
  - 6 Deleted "there is"
  - 7 Deleted "do"
  - 8 Deleted "there"
  - 9 Deleted "quite"
  - 10 Deleted "come"
  - 11 Deleted "the way"
  - 12 Deleted "from"
  - 13 Deleted "what are your"
  - 14 Deleted "without"
  - 15 Deleted "but"
  - 16 Deleted "there is"
  - 17 Deleted "being"
  - 18 Deleted "has"
  - 19 Deleted "this"
  - 20 Deleted "is not the distinction in"
  - 21 Deleted "was"
  - 22 Deleted "for"
  - 23 Deleted "is not necessarily"
  - 24 Deleted "he"
  - 25 Deleted "do"
  - 26 Deleted "that is not"
  - 27 Deleted "of the defense"
  - 28 Deleted "are the most, they are"
  - 29 Deleted "ya, ya"
  - 30 Deleted "is"
  - 31 Deleted "they should be"
  - 32 Deleted "and"
  - 33 Deleted "This"
  - 34 Deleted "so"
  - 35 Deleted "but there"
  - 36 Deleted "which, sure, so but"
  - 37 Deleted "there was"
  - 38 Deleted "that something is"
  - 39 Deleted "through which"
  - 40 Deleted "but"
  - 41 Deleted "have"
  - 42 Deleted "is to be"
  - 43 Deleted "we have"
  - 44 Deleted "is"
  - 45 Deleted "is"
  - 46 Deleted "and so"
  - 47 Deleted "as alternative to"
  - 48 Deleted "go"
  - 49 Deleted "that"
  - 50 Deleted "it has something"



## Session 17: no date

**Leo Strauss:** <sup>1</sup>Well, last time I was confronted by two difficulties. The first concerned a passage in chapter one of the Third Book, paragraph six, where Xenophon enumerates, or Socrates enumerates the qualities which a general must have. Perhaps you could read it again.

**Mr. Williamson:** This is one—

**LS:** Book 3, chapter one.

**Mr. Williamson:** Oh, I see.

**LS:** Paragraph six.

**Reader:** “But then that is only a small part of generalship. For a general must be capable of furnishing military equipment and providing supplies for the men; he must be resourceful, active, careful, hardy and quick-witted; he must be both gentle and brutal, at once straightforward and designing, capable of both caution and surprise, lavish and rapacious, generous and mean, skillful in defence and attack; and there are many other qualifications, some natural, some acquired, that are necessary to one who would succeed as a general.” (III.1.6)

**LS:** Ya. Yes. Now the context, as you may remember, was this: knowledge, *episteme*, not election or practice, makes a man a general; but as we see from this passage, knowledge is not enough. These qualities are not knowledge. Yet the alternation of these qualities—from kind to cruel, for example—must be regulated by *episteme*, and to that extent it remains true that it is knowledge which makes the general a general. Now the passage reminded me of Machiavelli’s thesis that virtue, what he calls [there]<sup>2</sup> *virtù*, consists in judicious alternation of moral virtue and moral vice. Mr. Williamson objected that the passage reminds more, or at least as much, of what Plato suggests by comparing the guardians to dogs: kind to acquaintances, nasty to strangers. But Xenophon’s statement here is much more detailed than Plato’s, which is not perhaps immediately relevant but not altogether irrelevant. Machiavelli refers to Xenophon. He does not refer to Plato. A much more important difficulty arose at the end of chapter four, paragraph 12. Now will you be so good as to read that?

**Reader:**

“Don’t look down on business men, Nicomachides. For the management of private concerns differs only in point of number from that of private affairs. In other respects they are much alike, and particularly in this, that neither can be carried on without men, and the men employed in private and public transactions are the same. For those who take charge of public affairs employ just the same men when they attend to their own; and those who understand how to employ them are successful directors of public and private concerns, and those who do not, fail in both.” (III.4.12)

**LS:** Yes. So it seems that the political art, and in particular the strategic art, differs from the economic art only in regard to the size of the area which they administer. Now Mr. Klein suggested last time that this has to be taken literally, and this is confirmed by passages which we

have read in the *Oeconomicus*—chapter 13, [paragraph] five, and [chapter] 14, [paragraph] nine. If you would perhaps read it?

**Reader:** ““Oh, but it is certainly not a laughing matter, Ischomachus. For anyone who can make men fit to rule others can also teach them to be masters of others; and if he can make them fit to be masters, he can make them fit to be kings. So anyone who can do that seems to me to deserve high praise rather than laughter.”” (*Oeconomicus* 13.5)

**LS:** So here this is even more explicit: the rule of master, that is to say, the rule of the master over slaves, is fundamentally the same as the rule of the king. And the other passage I had in mind was chapter 14, paragraph 9.

**Reader:** “On the other hand, if I discover that a man is inclined to be honest not only because he gains by his honesty, but also from a desire to win my approbation, I treat him like a free man by making him rich; and not only so, but I honour him as a gentleman.” (*Oeconomicus* 14.9)

**LS:** So here the slaves in their capacity as slaves can be gentlemen, and the whole edifice built up by Ischomachus in his description of his way of life—in which is understood that the gentlemen are a rare breed, and of course are freemen and wealthy men—is questioned. So this is so. But it is also, as is shown by the reaction [of]<sup>3</sup> Nichomachides, a paradoxical assertion. The question is: Is it *doxa*, the opinion questioned by Socrates, wholly groundless? Now in the passage at the end of chapter four, Socrates says the same men are ruled, managed, by the political man as by the economic man. Now this passage disregards the difference between free adult males and other human beings. Is this a negligible difference? This whole series of chapters here, Book 3, chapters one through seven, deals with the men who long for the noble things, that’s to say men desirous to rule in the *polis*.<sup>4</sup> One would not call a man who wants to rule his household and to rule it well a man who is striving for the noble things. Why then is it more noble to rule free adult males rather than women, children, and slaves? Because it’s more difficult. For they, these free adult males, are somehow his equals, whereas the women, children, and slaves are not his equals. Since they are his equals, he must be elected, whereas the householder of course is not elected. But as he has said throughout this section, already in the first chapter, the only thing which counts is *knowledge*, not election. Election is irrelevant. But, as I have tried to show, election is a consequence of freedom in the political sense. Hence, if election is irrelevant, freedom is irrelevant. The household is ruled monarchically; hence, the Socratic argument implies the *polis*, the city, ought to be ruled monarchically. And we remember the expression: the royal art, which Socrates seems to have regarded very highly. The issue is that of freedom, and <sup>5</sup>the issue came up, that is the most well-known example, in the seventeenth century, when Locke took issue with Filmer. And the issue was precisely: Is there an essential difference between political and domestic government, or is there no difference? For [in]<sup>6</sup> the Socratic view, as <sup>7</sup>his thesis says or implies, freedom as it is politically understood is conventional. A defensible assertion, because if slavery is conventional, then the opposite—freedom—will also be conventional. Now we can perhaps only read now another passage where this is taken up later on in Book 3, chapter nine, paragraph 10.

**Reader:** “Kings and rulers, he said, are not those who hold the sceptre, nor those who are chosen by the multitude, nor those on whom the lot falls, nor those who owe their power to force or deception; but those who know how to rule.” (*Mem.* III.9.10)

**LS:** Yes, so there are five titles to rule [that] are here disposed of, and election is of course one of them. But the question is: Will a man who has the required knowledge, will he in fact be the ruler? Will all men recognize his superiority and the wisdom of obeying him? The answer, I suppose, is no. So there would have to be some other means of establishing his rule, and this other means could only be one of these five here mentioned. But if election, which seems to be the most decent thing, is as irrelevant as force and fraud, then one could reach the conclusion: the man fit to rule may very well come to power by force and fraud. The main point is that he possesses that knowledge. Another work of Xenophon, the *Hiero*, is based on this assumption, where you see a tyrant who allegedly has committed—and he says so—an untold number of the most awful crimes is advised by a wise man that if he acts in so and so, such and such a manner, he will become perfectly happy and he’ll make his subjects happy. So <sup>8</sup>the prehistory of this beneficent rule is irrelevant. I think this is the whole issue implied here. And the status of freedom, whether that can be reduced altogether to *nomos*, perhaps from the highest point of view. But from the point of view somewhat closer to practice, this may be doubtful. And therefore one has to consider in reading this statement of Nichomachides—an external sign, by the way, which I forgot to mention, is this: when Socrates talks to this young fellow in the first chapter who wishes to become a general and Socrates advises him to go to the teacher of generalship, when he came back, Socrates says: “He looks majestic, as Agamemnon did according to Homer.” Now this majestic appearance is surely not one which the householder has. Of course it could be a mere appearance, it could be a mere appearance, which at closer inspection would vanish, but it could also be that this appearance is based on reasons connected with the fact that <sup>9</sup>knowledge is not simply *the* title to rule. And one can say that in general what men like Plato and Aristotle say is that two things must come together if a man is to be a legitimate ruler. One is wisdom and the other is *consent*—but the consent of the ruled. But the consent does not necessarily follow from the wisdom of the ruler, nor is the consent necessarily consent to wise proposals. This, I believe, is the context in which one must consider this section. Now shall we first discuss that?

**Student:** Is it wisdom to let lesser men rule?

**LS:** Pardon?

**Student:** Is it wisdom to let lesser men rule here?

**LS:** Is it wisdom to—?

**Student:** To let lesser men rule you even if you don’t have the consent of the governed—

**LS:** Ya, that is a dark question, but that is a very dark question; and then however the question arises: Could a wise man make a rebellion against unworthy rulers and thus establish his rule or the rule of people whom he regards as fitter than the present rulers?

**Student:** You mean whether he'll be capable of doing that?

**LS:** No, whether he would do it—whether he would do it, whether he would make such a rebellion or instigate it. The question can be stated differently: Is not rule of law such a great good that for all practical purposes it is *the* rule of action, political action? <sup>10</sup>I think everyone can imagine situations [or] has perhaps gone through situations in which the rule of laws, the rule of law did not seem good. Think of someone as subject to Stalin or Hitler. One cannot morally condemn a man who rebels here, but if the case is not such an extreme and therefore simple case, that's an awful responsibility because a bad law, one could say, is still better than lawlessness.

**Student:** I see.

**LS:** I think one could also show this by the German experience, where the laws which the Nazis laid down were, however horrible they were, still much more decent or less indecent than what they actually did against their laws. The law means some limitation of arbitrary will, and the line may be drawn at the wrong places, but as a limitation to arbitrariness it is good. And this, what they have in mind, what Xenophon particularly has in mind, is freedom: freedom of people who are not wise and law belong together. No freedom, no law. And vice-versa. Now is there any point—would you like to take this up?

**Student (probably Mr. Klein):** Well, I was wondering: if a man has the knowledge to rule—

**LS:** Ya.

**Student:** Does that imply that he must also want to rule?

**LS:** No, not necessarily. They are two different things.

**Student:** Well, I'm not entirely clear. He might—if he has sufficient knowledge how to rule and sees the circumstances surrounding him, his knowledge might tell him that he ought to rule.

**LS:** Under certain conditions, ya.

**Student:** Yeah. But if he doesn't want to rule he can still want to be an adviser of the ruler.

**LS:** Yes. Sure.

**Student:** And then in a certain way he is a ruler, although not officially.

**LS:** Ya. An ally of the rulers, as Xenophon would put it. But the question is that [that] presupposes, that does not depend entirely on him; it depends also on the advisees, whether they are willing to listen.

**Student:** Yes.

**LS:** Ya. And therefore the knowledge may be *the* qualification for rule, but <sup>11</sup>it does not make a man an actual ruler also.

**Student (not Mr. Klein):** It seems that the thing that is taught and the thing that would be taught by an advisor to a ruler, it seems to me that there is a great deal of question about its teachability. When Socrates goes to make a general out of a young man, of course the only thing he teaches him is tactics. And tactics, it seems to me, is the most theoretical aspect of generalship. It's the aspect which deals, well, which is most dealing with *episteme*, that is, knowledge in its pure form, of how to organize or how to interrelate the various parts of the army. It's a knowledge which in a certain sense is almost independent of everything else that the general has to know about, and that kind of knowledge usually boiled down to<sup>12</sup> an understanding of the difference between good and bad men. And I'm not sure that you can teach that, and I'm not sure that anyone who tries to be a ruler in an advisory capacity is ever going to meet with much success because, well, historically it's been the case that whenever a man has felt that that's what he was going to do, he wound up finding that all the things he really wanted to teach the ruler just couldn't be transferred from one human being to another, and that if he was going to be a ruler that he had to do it himself.

**LS:** Ya, but this is precisely—therefore Plato has this elegant solution: the wise man must be a king.

**Student:** Yeah.

**LS:** So this—but it is not made clear how he became king. Of course he could be a son of a king, this is mentioned; but assuming he was not a son of a king, how will he become the king?

**Student:** I hope not by trying to ascend through some kind of an advisory capacity, because I really feel that that's a fruitless—that it has always proven fruitless, and I'm not sure that it can be theoretically shown to be fruitless, but I have a feeling that there's a great deal of question as to the teachability.

**LS:** Ya. Well, there are very great difficulties that everyone I believe will grant now, and therefore one can understand the modern *anti-Socratics* who tried to solve the problem by starting from the consent angle. Locke is, perhaps—and Rousseau, are particularly well-known examples. Consent is the title. Of course they said wisdom is also necessary; but wisdom, wisdom is in the modern scheme left out on a limb some. It must be there, but what you can guarantee is only the consent, whereas in the ancient scheme, as a paper scheme at least, wisdom was provided for in the first place, and consent—ya, how to manage that? One could say of course [that] <sup>13</sup>if he knows how to rule he also knows how to persuade, and then <sup>14</sup>in this way [he can] get the consent. But again, this does not dispose of the difficulty caused by those people who simply refuse to listen. How can you persuade people who do this?

**Student:** Well, it seems that if a person really loves music and they know a lot about music, they're the ones who most want to hear good music. And it seems that if a person really knows how to rule, then he'll be the one who'll be most anxious for good rule. And if his knowledge is extensive enough so that he can see himself as the one that could institute the best rule then—

**LS:** Yes, but let us assume, let us, that is so, but let us assume that he is allergic to the noise, as Kant was.

**Student:** But it is better to give up the—it seems to me it is better, then, to give up the endeavor entirely and become a teacher and do something on a lesser scale or on a different scale than to try to become an advisor to a ruler which—

**LS:** That in a way is what Socrates did.

**Student:** Yeah.

**LS:** He did not become an advisor but he tried to show to gifted young men what the important things are in the *polis* and things which come . . . . not being an advisor later on unless they would ask him. But the situations would probably be very, very complex, and one would have to do something of which one could in no way be sure whether it would be superior to the alternatives. Read the daily paper, then you see the variety of proposals made: all with good reasons, more or less good reasons, and all also exposed where no one can say with any definiteness: “This is sound.” And if you look at the men who are from the past and, we still remember, who were thought to be at the time very wise, what did their wisdom lead to?

**Student:** Lead to? Usually to not going to an extreme, usually preventing people who might otherwise have gone to some extreme from going to . . . .

**LS:** Ya, but the trouble [is that] there are always some fellows around who are extremists.

**Student:** Yeah, well, it seems to be the function of wise men to act as something to kind of moderate or control people who are extremists.

**LS:** Yes, all right, let us leave it there. And let us start now [and] take now the next chapter, chapter five.

**Reader:** “Once when talking with the son of the great Pericles, he said—” (III.5.1)

**LS:** Now let us stop here for one moment. So here is the son of the very Pericles. Hitherto we had three nameless men at the beginning, then Nichomachides, a man with a significant name, the name <sup>15</sup>consisting of victory and battle, and now Pericles, one of the greatest names. And of course, for Xenophon or Socrates, Pericles is not the greatest Athenian statesman: as we have seen on an earlier occasion he spoke of Themistocles as a true benefactor of Athens and Pericles as a mere spellbinder, in <sup>16</sup>Book 2, chapter six, paragraph 13. So this is an ascent, we must keep this in mind. Now go on.

**Reader:** ““For my part, Pericles, I feel hopeful that now you will become general, our city, er, now you have become general, our city will be more efficient and more famous in the art of war, and will defeat our enemies.”” (III.5.1)

**LS:** Yes, one second. So Socrates approves of an election, just as he did in the preceding chapter where he approved of the election of Nichomachides' rival. But Socrates is satisfied, it seems, with the Athenian regime—but we must not forget generals were elected, as they call it, by raising the hand and not by lot, and what Socrates objected to as manifestly irrational was election by lot. The subject is again here, as you see, military command. Yes, now let us go on.

**Reader:**

“I could wish,” answered Pericles, “that it might be as you say, Socrates; but how these changes are to come about I cannot see.”

“Should you like to discuss them with me, then,” said Socrates, “and consider how they can be brought about?”

“I should.”

“Do you know then, that in point of numbers the Athenians are not inferior to the Boeotians?”

“Yes, I know.”

“Do you think that the larger number of fine, well-developed men could be selected from among the Boeotians or the Athenians?”

“In that matter too they seem to be at no disadvantage.”

“Which do you think are the more united?”

“The Athenians, I should say, for many of the Boeotians resent the selfish behaviour of the Thebans. At Athens I see nothing of that sort.”

“And again, the Athenians are more ambitious and more high-minded than other peoples; and these qualities are among the strongest incentives to heroism and patriotic self-sacrifice.” (III.5.1-3)

**LS:** Ya, so the word here is used for fame and the fatherland. The word fatherland has occurred before, we observed it, and it occurs <sup>17</sup>now in these *higher* political chapters—five through seven—as it occurred earlier in Book 2, chapters one and six. One can say [that] in the most political chapters they use this loaded term because fatherland, *patris*, has a much greater emotional appeal than *polis*. Yes?

**Reader:**

“Yes, in these respects too the Athenians need not fear criticism.”

“And besides, none have inherited a past more crowded with great deeds; and many are heartened by such a heritage and encouraged to care for virtue and prove their gallantry.”

“All you have said is true, Socrates. But, you see, since the disasters sustained by Tolmides and the Thousand at Lebedea<sup>i</sup> and by Hippocrates at Delium,<sup>ii</sup> the relations of the Athenians and Boeotians are changed: the glory of the Athenians is brought low, the pride of the Thebans is exalted; and now the Boeotians, who formerly would not venture, even in their own country, to face the Athenians without help from Sparta and the rest of the Peloponnese, threaten to invade Attica by themselves, and the Athenians, who formerly overran Boeotia, fear that the Boeotians may plunder Attica.” (III.5.3-4)

<sup>i</sup> At the battle of Coronea (or Lebedea) in 446 B.C., the Boeotians defeated and destroyed the Athenian army and gained independence (Thucydides, I. 113).

<sup>ii</sup> The Athenians were heavily defeated by the Boeotians at Delium in 424 B.C. (Ibid., IV. 96 f.).

**LS:** Yes. So while the Athenians may have all these good qualities of which Socrates has spoken in the present situation—which is caused by two severe defeats of the Athenians at the hands of their enemies, the Boetians—this is no longer true. Surely the first of these defeats shows that low Athenian morale did not cause the defeat because—in the second case one could say that perhaps—. The Battle of Delium, by the way, you know that Socrates participated in it. Plato tells us that three times in three different works. Xenophon does not say a word about it. That is one of the characteristic differences between the two writers: Xenophon, much more of a military man, does not speak of Socrates' military prowess. Yes. How does Socrates reply to that?

**Reader:** ““Ah, I am aware of that,” answered Socrates; ‘but the disposition of our city is now more to a good ruler's liking. For confidence breeds carelessness, slackness, disobedience: fear makes men more attentive, more obedient, more amenable to discipline.’” (III.5.5)

**LS:** So in other words, what is held, what seems to be so little promising, the Athenians' depression or fear, is the most encouraging thing because then people will be reasonable if they fear and are not inflated by self-confidence. Yes?

**Reader:** ““The behaviour of sailors is a case in point. So long as they have nothing to fear, they are, I believe, an unruly lot, but when they expect a storm or an attack, they not only carry out all orders, but watch in silence for the word of command like choristers.’” (III.5.5-6)

**LS:** The choristers of course behave well without fear. We may note this in passing. Yes.

**Reader:**

“Well,” exclaimed Pericles, “if they are now in the mood for obedience, it seems time to say how we can revive in them a longing for the old virtue and fame and happiness.”

“If then,” said Socrates, “we wanted them to claim money that others held, the best way of egging them on to seize it would be to show them that it was their fathers' money and belongs to them. As we want them to strive for pre-eminence in virtue, we must show them that this belonged to them in old days, and that by striving for it they will surpass all other men.” (III.5.7-8)

**LS:** So people can best be induced to desire and to grasp wealth which is in the possession of others if one tells them that it is their *own* wealth which the present possessors have taken, or, which amounts to the same, their fathers' wealth. <sup>18</sup>Similarly, regarding taking care of preeminence in virtue, in excellence, if one is told: “*You*, your fathers had this excellence, it belongs rightfully to you,” that will be able to incite [them] to act in such a way. Yes?

**Reader:** “How then can we teach this?”

“I think by reminding them that their earliest ancestors of whom we have heard any account were, as they themselves have heard the most valiant.” (III.5.9)

**LS:** Yes. If the ancient is good, which was already alluded to before, then the most ancient must be the best. And therefore we go back to the earliest ancestors, of which we and everybody else knows of course only through hearsay. That cannot be helped. On the contrary, that leads to the



consequence that we must say hearsay is a much more noble source of knowledge than seeing with one's own eyes. Why do we know? Hearsay. Yes?

**Student:** Isn't that exactly the opposite of what happens in the beginning of the *Republic*, where it's clear that the authority of Cephalus is more ancient than any of the other people that could be interlocutors—

**LS:** Yes.

**Student:** but he's dismissed as an interlocutor because he's useless. He already thinks he knows, and it's impossible to teach him.

**LS:** Ya, but that's the same issue we discussed before, that something may be only by *nomos*, by convention, and therefore cannot bind one's mind. And yet this *nomos* may have a sufficient reason to be respected. Let us say it may be a good rule of thumb, not a strict law. And that's here also. Yes? Ya.

**Reader:**

"Do you refer to the judgment of the gods,<sup>iii</sup> which Cecrops delivered in his court because of his virtue?"

"Yes, and the care and birth of Erectheus,<sup>iv</sup> and the war waged in his day with all the adjacent country, and the war between the sons of Heracles<sup>v</sup> and the Peloponnesians, and all the wars waged in the days of Theseus,<sup>vi</sup> and all of which, in all of which it is manifest that they were champions among the men of their time." (III.5.10)

**LS:** Yes. That's the only reference to gods which occurs in the whole section on politics, chapters one through seven. Yes?

**Reader:** "You may add the victories of their descendants, who lived not long before our own day: some they gained unaided in their struggle with the lords of all Asia and of Europe as far as Macedonia, the owners of more power and wealth than the world has ever seen, who had wrought deeds that none had equaled; in others they were fellow-champions with the Peloponnesians both on land and sea. These men, like their fathers, are reported to have been far superior to all other men of their time." (III.5.11)

**LS:** Yes. <sup>19</sup>First he refers to these what we call mythical events in the most ancient antiquity, and then in a secondary way, introduced by the expression "if you wish"—that is much less obligatory than the first argument. Now what does he refer to there, in the paragraph we just read? The Persian Wars. Pardon?

**Student:** What, what did you say? I didn't—

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<sup>iii</sup> i.e., between Poseidon and Athena for the possession of Attica.

<sup>iv</sup> *Iliad*, II. 547.

<sup>v</sup> The Athenians claimed that it was through their assistance that the sons of Heracles gained the victory (Herodotus, ix. 27).

<sup>vi</sup> Against the Amazons and Thracians.

**LS:** The Persian Wars.

**Student:** Oh.

**LS:** Ya.

**Student:** What do you—?

**LS:** Which they fought partly alone. <sup>20</sup>They fought against the rulers of Asia, of the whole of Asia and Europe. This the Persian Wars. He does not say anything about the later generation after the [Persian Wars]<sup>21</sup>. Ya. Let us perhaps read the next paragraph.

**Reader:**

“Yes, that is the report of them.”

“Therefore, though there have been many migrations in Greece, these continued to dwell in their own land: many referred to them their rival claims, many found a refuge with them from the brutality of the oppressor.” (III.5.11-12)

**LS:** Ya. This could refer to what happened at a more recent age, the time of the Attic League. But on the whole, it presents just the reverse of what the old Pericles said in the Funeral Speech, when he speaks of the ancestors, *yes*, the ancient ancestors, and then the Persian War generation, better. But we are at the peak, and here just the opposite appraisal. Yes?

**Reader:**

“Yes, Socrates,” cried Pericles, “and I wonder how our city can have become so degenerate.”

“My own view,” replied Socrates, “is that the Athenians, as a consequence of their great superiority, grew careless of themselves, and have thus become degenerate, much as athletes who are in a class by themselves and win the championship easily are apt to grow slack and drop below their rivals.” (III.5.13)

**LS:** So one could say that the Age of Pericles, far from being the peak, is the decline of Athens; and that is of course in perfect agreement with what Plato says about that, although this does not prove that Xenophon thought the same. Yes. Now, and I’m sorry—and we must also [say] that the great Pericles, in Thucydides, opposes to the Spartans’ *fear*, caution, [and] slowness the Athenians’ daring and self-confidence. So it is just turned around, the point: what Socrates says here is just the opposite of what Pericles himself says, and that he says it to Pericles’ son makes it of course particularly—shall I say?—amusing. This Pericles, he was <sup>22</sup>the youngest son of Pericles [and] had great troubles with his father, so probably he would not have minded it as much as other Athenians, <sup>23</sup>what Socrates does here. Now let us go on.

**Reader:**

“How, then, can they now recover their old virtue?”

“There is no mystery about it, as I think. If they find out the customs of their ancestors and practise them as well as they did, they will come to be as good as they were; or failing that, they need but to imitate those who now have the pre-eminence and to practise their customs, and if

they are equally careful in observing them, they will be as good as they, and, if more careful, even better.” (III.5.14)

**LS:** So now the first question: Can the pursuits of the ancestors still be recovered or even discovered? That is the question. Failing that, the Athenians now might be able to surpass those who are best at present. A surpassing of the ancestors is, of course, absolutely out of the question. That is in full agreement with the spirit of this whole conversation and more than that. Yes?

**Student (Reader):** Excuse me, are those who have the preeminence necessarily other Athenians, leading Athenians?

**LS:** No, no, no. <sup>24</sup>Well, that would mean . . . It will become clear whom he has in mind, but it could up to this point mean the Boeotians. Yes. Let us go on.

**Reader:** ““That means that it is a long march for our city to perfection. For when will Athenians—”” (III.5.15)

**LS:** Now, one second. “Perfection”: the word used is *kalokagathía*, perfect gentlemanship. In Book 2, chapter six, paragraph 26, perfect gentlemanship was presented as *the* solution of the political problem. It comes up here and I think only here, in these chapters on the *polis*. Yes?

**Reader:** ““For when will Athenians show the Lacedaemonian reverence for age, seeing that they despise all their elders, beginning with their own fathers? When will they adopt the Lacedaemonian system of training, seeing that they not only neglect to make themselves fit, but mock at those who take the trouble to do so? When will they reach that standard of obedience to their rulers, seeing that they make contempt of rulers a point of honour? Or when will they attain that harmony, seeing that, instead of working together for the general good, they are more envious and bitter against one another than against the rest of the world, are the most quarrelsome of men in public and private assemblies, most often go to law with one another, and would rather make profit of one another so than by mutual service, and while regarding public affairs as alien to themselves, yet fight over them too, and find their chief enjoyment in having the means to carry on such strife?”” (III.5.15-16)

**LS:** Now we see who the men best at present are: not the Boeotians, but the Spartans. That of course again confirms what I said before: the order of rank established by the old Pericles is just turned [upside] down. The Spartans are a model, the model in this work. Otherwise the most ancient Athenians, of whom unfortunately we do not know anything, <sup>25</sup>cannot be, [cannot] serve as a model. Now here there is one phrase which I believe is particularly revealing. Towards the end of paragraph 16 he says of the Athenians that they use the common things as if they were alien, foreign, as if they had nothing to do with them. In Thucydides, the Corinthians, speaking of the Athenians, say that the Athenians use their bodies as if they were all together alien to them in the interest of the city: just the opposite. They regard their own bodies as negligible compared with the *polis*, and here the common things are regarded as alien.

**Student:** It seems to be easier to forget what people say, and it's very hard to emulate the great sayings of the great fathers. But if great fathers have done great things—I'm thinking now of the line in the Gettysburg Address—if great fathers have *done* great things, they will be remembered. It's easy to forget what people said. When people *do* things with their bodies—

**LS:** I don't know what this has to do—

**Student:** Well, if they make a—if the Spartans do something in battle, then it seems to be something that stands as easily remembered.

**LS:** I don't know whether I understand. What I wanted to show here by the last remark was only this: that here <sup>26</sup>the wording reminds of Thucydides, and that's to say of the inversion of the judgments compared with Thucydides, or rather with Pericles.

**Student:** Yeah, what is the difference in terms of memorability between actions and words? What is the reason why the Spartans seem to hold their fathers in great reverence? And the Spartans seem to be a nation of people who place a great deal of emphasis on action and even on physical action, and the Athenians seem to be a group of people who spend a lot of time talking and place very little emphasis on their bodies and have no reverence for their fathers. I mean—

**LS:** Yes, well, that is—indeed, there is something to that. You remember that Socrates was accused that he subverted paternal authority.

**Student:** Yeah.

**LS:** Yes. Ya, but this could be—that could be so, but still, here this point <sup>27</sup>was stated here by the younger Pericles, not by Socrates, so there is no direct contradiction of Socrates himself. Ya? Yes.

**Reader:**

“So it comes about that mischief and evil grow apace in the city, enmity and mutual hatred spring up among the people, so that I am always dreading that some evil past bearing may befall the city.”

“No, no, Pericles, don't<sup>vii</sup> think the wickedness of the Athenians so utterly past remedy. Don't you see what good discipline they maintain in their fleets, how well they obey the umpires in athletic contests, how they take orders from the choir-trainers as readily as any?”

“Ah yes, and strange indeed it is that such men submit themselves to their masters, and yet <sup>viii</sup>the infantry and cavalry, who are supposed to be the pick of the citizens for good character—”

**LS:** Good character means also *kalokagathía*, perfect gentlemanship. Yes?

**Reader:**

are the most insubordinate.”

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<sup>vii</sup> At this point there is a break in the tape; the missing portion of the passage read was taken from the translation.

<sup>viii</sup> The tape resumes here.

Then Socrates asked, “But what of the Court of the Areopagus, Pericles? Are not its members persons who have won approval?”

“Certainly.”

“Then do you know of any who decide the cases that come before them and perform all their other functions more honourably, more in accordance with law, with more dignity and justice?”

“I am not finding fault with the Areopagus.” (III.5.17-20)

**LS:** Now here there is also something funny because old Pericles was the one who had brought down the Council of the Areopagus in the interest of the democracy. That was an old pre-democratic council. So Socrates as it were corrects here the established regime, the democracy—the extreme democracy, as Aristotle calls it, by referring to [the] Areopagus as a pillar of the city. Yes?

**Reader:**

“Then you must not despair of Athenian discipline.”

“But, you see, in the army, where good conduct, discipline, submission are most necessary, our people pay no attention to these things.”

“This may be due to the incompetence of the officers.”

**LS:** Literally, that the least knowing rule over them. Yes.

**Reader:**

“You must have noticed that no one attempts to exercise authority over our harpists, choristers and dancers, if he is incompetent, nor over wrestlers or wrestlers who also box? All who have authority over them can tell where they learned their business; but most of our generals are improvisers. However, I don't suppose you are one of this sort. I suppose you can say when you began to learn strategy as well as when you began wrestling. Many of the principles, I think, you have inherited from your father, and many others you have gathered from every source from which you could learn anything useful to a general. I think, too, that you take much trouble that you may not unconsciously lack any knowledge useful to a general; and if you find that you don't know anything, you seek out those who have the knowledge, grudging neither gifts nor thanks, that you may learn what you don't know from them and may have the help of good coaching.” (III.5.20-23)

**LS:** Yes, and now Socrates says: Of course, your case is different; you are a knower. You have learned strategy, strategic art, not the least from your own father who was a famous general, so we have no reason to worry. But Pericles, what does he say?

**Reader:** ““I can see, Socrates, that in saying this you don't really think I study these things, but you are trying to show me that one who is going to command an army must study all of them; and of course I admit that you are right.”” (III.5.24)

**LS:** Ya, <sup>28</sup>here Xenophon comes rather close to speaking of Socrates' irony.

**Reader:**

“Have you observed, Pericles, that our frontier is protected by great mountains extending to Boeotia, through which there are steep and narrow passes leading into our land, and that the interior is cut across by rugged mountains?”

“Certainly.”

“Further, have you heard that the Mysians and Pisidians, occupying very rugged country in the Great King's territory and lightly armed, contrive to overrun and damage the King's territory and to preserve their own freedom?”

“Yes, I have heard so.”

“And don't you think that active young Athenians, more lightly armed and occupying the mountains that protect our country, would prove a thorn in the side of the enemy and a strong bulwark of defence to our people?”

“Socrates,” answered<sup>ix</sup> Pericles, “I think all these suggestions too have a practical value.” (III.5.25-27)

**LS:** So in other words, Pericles admits Socrates *is* a better general than he. Socrates ought to have been elected general, which, of course, was not the case. The whole territory of Attica should be defended against the Boeotians. This also reminds one of Pericles, because Pericles' strategy in the Peloponnesian War was the territory of Attica should *not* be defended and Athens should depend on her navy and the [merchants]<sup>x</sup>. Yes?

**Reader:** ““Then, since you like them, adopt them, my good fellow. Any part of them that you carry out will bring honour to you and good to the state; and should you fail in part, you will neither harm the state nor disgrace yourself.”” (III.5.28)

**LS:** Ya. It will be noble for you, *kalon*, and good for the city. These are two *different* things, noble and good. We shall have to come back to this point later on. The noble is not necessarily good for the individual and vice-versa. This reads like a prophecy for Pericles. Pericles was one—the younger Pericles—was one of the generals at the Battle of the Arginusae, which the Athenians won. That was good for the city. But the victorious generals were accused of not having taken up the corpses, and Pericles was one of those who were executed. So it was not good for him, this victory. You'll remember the passage we read in the first chapter of the First Book: that one doesn't know if one is a general whether it profits one to be a general, the only way to find out about that is to ask an oracle which could tell you. Human knowledge does not suffice. The fact that the subject here is the military situation between Athens and Boeotia has given occasion for many speculations. When, at what time, was the situation so as it is described here? And people have reached the conclusion that this was the situation long after Socrates' death, say, in 371. Well, we know that this is wholly irrelevant for the understanding of what Xenophon teaches. We don't have to go into that. Now is there something which you would like to discuss in this chapter? Yes?

**Student:** Just when Socrates is attempting to show Pericles that there's no reason for him to be so desperate about the possibility of the Athenians winning or recovering their virtues, he mentions certain areas in which <sup>29</sup>they did exercise some of their old virtues. And he mentions the fleet. Was the fleet manned by different types of people than the—?

<sup>ix</sup> In translation: “replied”

<sup>x</sup> It is likely that the word here is “merchants.”

**LS:** The sailors were the poorer people who were unable . . . the infantry, heavy infantry, the hoplites, were people of some property. And the poorer people were used in the navy, of course not in command positions. These were also generals. They did not make a distinction in name between generals and admirals. The Spartans did that, but the Athenians did not. Ya, but the fleet, the navy, is good when the storm is impending and when the enemies are close. But you mean, you mean something different.

**Student:** Well, I was just wondering why it is that the Athenians who serve in the navy have somehow managed to be more successful. Why, what is there—is something particular about their character that makes them less vulnerable to the decline that the rest of the Athenians seem to have suffered?

**LS:** I don't know whether it has something to do with character rather with training. Since the time of Themistocles they began to build up a navy and especially old Pericles, of course. Then let's go to the next chapter, chapter six.

**Reader:** "Ariston's son, Glaucon, was attempting to become an orator and striving for headship in the state, though he was less than twenty years old; and none of his friends or relations could check him, though he would get himself dragged from the platform and make himself a laughing-stock. Only Socrates, who took an interest in him for the sake of Plato and Glaucon's son Charmides, managed to check him." (III.6.1)

**LS:** Oh no, that is so bad. I didn't want—

**Reader (Mr. Williamson):** I'm sorry, yeah.

**LS:** Favorably disposed toward him for the sake of Charmides, the son of Glaucon, *and* for the sake of Plato. Did he change the order?

**Reader (Mr. Williamson):** I think, yes; yes, he does.

**LS:** Oh, that is quite bad. To mention only one little point which we shall discuss next time, the next chapter. So obviously Charmides and Plato were much more important to Socrates than young Glaucon because he was favorably disposed to him *for the sake* of these men. The next chapter, chapter seven, contains a conversation between Socrates and Charmides. And then we would expect a conversation in the following chapter between *Socrates and Plato*, and instead we get a conversation between Socrates and Aristippus, a kind of philosopher, so that the movement has about this character: up, and then the peak is missing, and then goes down. Plato is pointed to but omitted, that is; and of course to write a dialogue between Socrates and Plato would have been not only improper but foolish. Now with Glaucon there seems to be a descent, because he is such a young, rather foolish young man. But we must also consider the subject matter, not only the interlocutor, and then we will see that this chapter marks an ascent beyond the earlier chapters. All earlier chapters dealt with generals or other military officers. In the last chapter, in the one with the conversation with Pericles, a grave political issue—the Areopagus—came up, but in the main it was still military. This is the first *political* chapter in the

comprehensive sense of the word. Glaucon, not yet twenty years old. We'll remember that Alcibiades was nineteen years old when he had his conversation with Pericles, with his guardian Pericles, in Book 1, chapter two. But Alcibiades did not make himself ridiculous. That's an important difference. So let us then go on.

**Reader:**

For once on meeting him, he stopped him and contrived to engage his attention by saying:

"Glaucon, have you made up your mind to be our chief man in the state?"

"I have, Socrates."

"Well, by Zeus,<sup>xi</sup> there's no more honourable ambition in the world; for obviously, if you gain your object, you will be able to get whatever you want, and you will have the means of helping your friends: you will lift up your father's house and exalt your fatherland; and you will make a name for yourself first at home, later on in Greece, and possibly, like Themistocles, in foreign lands as well; wherever you go, you will be a man of mark." (III.6.2)

**LS:** Ya, so that's the way in which Socrates gains the attention, and the friendly attention, of Glaucon. You see there are seven items which he enumerates here and the fatherland is in the center, as it should be. Yes.

**Reader:** "When Glaucon heard this, he felt proud and gladly lingered.

Next Socrates asked, 'Well, Glaucon, as you want to win honour, is it not obvious that you must benefit your city?'" (III.6.3)

**LS:** You see this distinction is the same as that between noble and good at the end of the preceding chapter. You want to be honored—honor is something noble, beautiful, *kalòn*—and then you must benefit the city. You must do some *good* to the city. Yes.

**Reader:**

"Most certainly."

"By the gods,<sup>xii</sup> don't be reticent, then; but tell us how you propose to begin your services to the state."

As Glaucon remained dumb, apparently considering for the first time how to begin, Socrates said: "If you wanted to add to a friend's fortune, you would set about making him richer. Will you try, then, to make your city richer?"

"Certainly." (III.6.4)

**LS:** If you wish to increase a friend's estate, a friend's household. Of course Glaucon has no household of his own, he's still too young for that. The application to the city is clear: you would wish to make the city rich. But it is interesting that increase of the estate, not simply managing the estate, is here taken to be as a matter of course the aim of the economic man. And in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus* we have seen that, where at the very beginning it is said the economic is the art of *managing*. Immediately thereafter, that is replaced by increasing, and increasing remains the subject throughout the work. But we are reminded that there is an alternative of a less acquisitive kind. Yes.

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<sup>xi</sup> In translation: "Upon my word"

<sup>xii</sup> In translation: "Pray"



**Reader:**

“Would she not be richer if she had a larger revenue?”

“Oh yes, presumably.”

“Now tell me, from what sources are the city's revenues at present derived and what is their total? No doubt you have gone into this matter, in order to raise the amount of any that are deficient and supply any that are lacking.”

“Certainly not,” exclaimed Glaucon, “I haven't gone into that.” (III.6.6)

**LS:** Ya, this kind of thing I have not—one could almost say, I have not yet considered. Of course, he did consider the more interesting things than finance. Yes?

**Reader:**

“Well, if you have left that out, tell us the expenditure of the city. No doubt you intend to cut down any items that are excessive.”

“The fact is, I haven't had time yet for that either.”

“Oh, then we will postpone the business of making the city richer; for how is it possible to look after income and expenditure without knowing what they are?”

“Well, Socrates, one can make our enemies contribute to the city's wealth.” (III.6.6-7)

**LS:** Ya, this was obviously what Glaucon had in mind and therefore had neglected this dismal science because of his warlike aspirations. Yes.

**Reader:**

“By Zeus<sup>xiii</sup>, of course, provided he is stronger than they; but if he be weaker, he may lose what she has got instead.”

“True.”

“Therefore, in order to advise her whom to fight, it is necessary to know the strength of the city and of the enemy, so that, if the city be stronger, one may recommend her to go to war, but if weaker than the enemy, may persuade her to beware.”

“You are right.”

“First, then, tell us the naval and military strength of our city, and then that of her enemies.”

“No, of course I can't tell you out of my head.”

“Well, if you have made notes, fetch them, for I would greatly like to hear this.”

“But, I tell you, I haven't yet made any notes either.”

“Then we will postpone offering advice about war too for the present. You are new to power, and perhaps have not had time to investigate such big problems. But the defence of the country, now, I feel sure you have thought about that, and know how many of the garrisons are well placed and how many are not, and how many of the guards are efficient and how many are not; and you will propose to strengthen the well-placed garrisons and to do away with those that are superfluous.”

“No, no; I shall propose to do away with them all, for the only effect of maintaining them is that our crops are stolen.” (III.6.7-11)

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<sup>xiii</sup> In translation: “Yes”

**LS:** This is the only subject to which Glaucon has given some thought, ya. In all other cases, he couldn't give *any* answer. Here he gives one answer. Yes?

**Reader:**

"But if you do away with the garrisons, don't you think that anyone will be at liberty to rob us openly? However, have you been on a tour of inspection, or how do you know that they are badly maintained?"

"By guess-work."

"Then shall we wait to offer advice on this question too until we really know, instead of merely guessing?"

"Perhaps it would be better." (III.6.11)

**LS:** Ya. So even the only subject to which he had given any thought he had given to it insufficient thought. Yes.

**Student:** It's also—

**LS:** Pardon?

**Student:** It's also amusing—it's the policy of Pericles [that] is put in the mouth of Glaucon, so . . . . It's also amusing comparing it to the last chapter that Pericles, the policy of elder Pericles, is put into the mouth of this foolish young boy.

**LS:** I can't, I can't acoustically—

**Mr. Williamson:** [repeating question] It's curious that Pericles's policy is put into the mouth of this foolish young man.

**Student:** It's the only thing he spoke of, to do the same thing as Pericles' policy—that is, remove the garrisons automatically.

**LS:** Ya, not quite. Do you think one could say that? I don't.

**Mr. Williamson:** Well, there was the policy to remove the citizens into the walls of Athens—

**LS:** Ya.

**Mr. Williamson:** when the Spartans invaded, and not to attempt to keep them out.

**LS:** Oh, I see. Ya, ya. Ya, this—well, I will consider it. Yes?

**Reader:**

"Now for the silver mines. I am sure you have not visited them, and so cannot tell why the amount derived from them has fallen."

"No, indeed, I have not been there."

“To be sure: the district is considered unhealthy, and so when you have to offer advice on the problem, this excuse will serve.”

“You're chaffing me.”

“Ah, but there's one problem I feel sure you haven't overlooked: no doubt you have reckoned how long the corn grown in the country will maintain the population, and how much is needed annually, so that you may not be caught napping, should the city at any time be short, and may come to the rescue and relieve the city by giving expert advice about food.”

“What an overwhelming task, if one has got to include such things as that in one's duties!”

“But, you know, no one will ever manage even his own household successfully unless he knows all its needs and sees that they are all supplied. Seeing that our city contains more than ten thousand houses, and it is difficult to look after so many families at once, you must have tried to make a start by doing something for one, I mean your uncle's? It needs it—”

**LS:** That is Charmides, probably. The uncle, ya. Ya?

**Reader:**

“and if you succeed with that one, you can set to work on a larger number. But if you can't do anything for one, how are you going to succeed with many? If a man can't carry one talent, it's absurd for him to try to carry more than one, isn't it?”

“Well, I could do something for uncle's household if only he would listen to me.”

“What? You can't persuade your uncle, and yet you suppose you will be able to persuade all the Athenians, including your uncle, to listen to you? Pray take care, Glaucon, that your daring ambition doesn't lead to a fall! Don't you see how risky it is to say or do what you don't understand? Think of others whom you know to be the sort of men who say and do what they obviously don't understand. Do you think they get praise or blame by it? And think of those who understand what they say and what they do. You will find, I take it, that the men who are famous and admired always come from those who have the widest knowledge, and the infamous and despised from the most ignorant.” (III.6.11-17)

**LS:** He said “come from them.” That's to say [that] knowledge is necessary but not the sufficient condition, because in addition they would still have to be elected. Yes?

**Reader:** “Therefore, if you want to win fame and admiration in public life, try to get a thorough knowledge of what you propose to do. If you enter on a public career with this advantage over others, I should not be surprised if you gained the object of your ambition quite easily.” (III.6.18)

**LS:** Yes. Now this is the end. Now here, this chapter is interesting also for a somewhat external reason: here Socrates delineates the objects of political science in the old sense—*politikê episteme*—and especially of that kind of political knowledge which an Athenian statesman must have. The silver mines would be sign that this is specifically Athenian. Socrates teaches here political things more clearly than in any previous chapter. And this teaching the political things has apparently nothing to do with his raising the question, <sup>30</sup>what is the *polis*? At least there is no

manifest connection. This statement here reminds us of a chapter in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, Book 1, chapter four, in which Aristotle discusses the subjects with which the political orator must be familiar. And he says there: "We must say that the most important subjects about which all men deliberate and deliberative orators harangue are five in number: namely, ways and means, war and peace, the defense of the country, imports and exports, legislation." Now the first four are in Xenophon, because the silver mines probably refers to exports, and that is followed <sup>31</sup>explicitly by corn supplies, i.e. imports. But legislation is completely absent from Xenophon. What also explains this chapter is that in order to understand legislation, one must understand the relation of the various laws to various regimes—say, democracy, oligarchy, or whatever it is. Now there is nothing of this kind <sup>32</sup>here. We may say that this is part of Socrates' justice in the sense of law-abidingness, that he avoids this question of the ground of the laws, of the relativity of the laws, as much as possible.

Aristotle says also in his enumeration, war and peace. Here there is nothing of peace said. That is in agreement with what we know of Glaucon from Plato's *Republic*. He was a very war-like young man, and especially in the Fifth Book that comes out so beautifully: Socrates tries to limit the harsh practices of war and Glaucon doesn't like that, and a kind of compromise comes out: killing and burning and other, and looting, against barbarians is all right but not against Greeks. But this is Glaucon's compromise suggestion, since he cannot get the same in wars against Greeks. And I believe that this is also the reason [that] in this connection he brings up the question: But how is this wonderful *polis* possible? . . . which leads then to the whole question of the philosopher king. He interrupts, as it were, the discussion of warfare because <sup>33</sup>Socrates doesn't make it tasty enough for him.

There was another point which I wanted to mention. Yes. In these seven chapters devoted to men longing for the noble things, five are devoted to military matters and only two to political matters: the one which we have read now and the following chapter. And for illustration I would like to read, read you a passage from Plato's *Republic*, Book 3, 407e. They speak about Asclepius, Asclepius' art of healing. "His sons too were—" No, Glaucon says: "Asclepius was according to your description a political man." "Obviously," said I, "that was his character. And his sons too, don't you in see that at Troy they proved themselves good fighting-men and practised medicine as I described it, as I described it?" <sup>xiv</sup> Politics is replaced by war, by war. That is—as one could say, making an impossible pun,—*polis* comes from *polemos*, city comes from war, the word for city comes from the word for war. That is a thought which is, of course, always present; and only Aristotle considers the possibility of a *polis* so situated that it has no neighbors, in a far-away island perhaps, that it would be a city without war. But that is only a very marginal possibility, if it is a possibility, and there is nothing of the kind in Plato. Now, is there anything you'd—yes?

**Student:** The activities of the politician—

**LS:** Pardon?

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<sup>xiv</sup> Strauss's translation or paraphrase.

**Student:** [Louder] The activities of the politician that are described here, finding out how much money the state has got, how much it needs—where are the silver mines, how many ships, and those things. Ischomachus taught his wife to take care of that kind of thing. He tried—sometimes she'd make mistakes—but he tried as much as he could to get her to learn how to know how many pots there were, how many cloaks—

**LS:** Ya.

**Student:** how much silver, and it seems that when you read that passage from Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, you said yourself that these are the things that a man must know for political oratory, and also—

**LS:** Aristotle says that.

**Student:** Yeah. It also seems incredibly strange that Socrates would recommend to someone to learn these things to become a politician, because it seems that everything else Socrates says about politics indicates that the true nature of the statesman is to ask such questions as: What is good and what is bad? What should man's life be like? How should men live together?

**LS:** Ya, but—

**Student:** And it's not to know how many—so why would he tell this person to learn how many ships? Why not have this person learn what a good person is than [to] select a good person and send him out to find out how many ships?

**LS:** Ya, sure, Socrates discusses these matters with Glaucon in order to show to Glaucon that he does not understand *anything* of these things which he implicitly claims to understand. He doesn't have to go beyond that.

**Student:** He doesn't have to show that he's not really—

**LS:** No. But on the other hand, you must admit, I believe, if there were a philosopher ruling somewhere, he would have to descend to such matters.

**Student:** He could send people out to find out about those things. If he knew the nature of men, he could figure out reliable men and send them to find out about the garrisons.

**LS:** Ya, but still, even reliable and first-rate experts may be mistaken. He must form a judgment of his own somehow and especially in more simple societies, as the classical were, where it was not so terribly difficult to find out these facts.

**Student:** I somehow think that if a man is going to rule a big country and his time is pretty much taken up, and the best he can hope to do is spend enough time with his advisors to discard dishonest ones, and they have to do the looking for him. They have to be his eyes and ears, and they have to know how many garrisons. If he even began to take a step like that—

**LS:** Ya, but the advisors are only advisors. They cannot give orders. And before he . . . how did President Truman say? Here the buck stops, ya? That at a certain point decisions have to be made.

**Student:** Oh, yeah. But the decisions of a true statesman are on the highest level of—

**LS:** Yes, but you must not—sure, but you have also to consider, to think a bit more about how this would look like in practice. This, what you say, is all true, but one must also consider the details a bit, especially if one recommends it to society.

**Student:** I'm not sure that that's what Socrates is recommending.

**LS:** Pardon?

**Student:** I'm not sure that that's what Socrates is recommending.

**LS:** Ya, well, nor am I. But in the *Republic*, at any rate, he seems to recommend it, at least to those present. It's true, he does not go in the *agora* and propose a radical change in the Athenian law and order, and that's true.

**Student (sounds like Mr. Klein):** Mr. . . . don't you think that the man who is a chief of a state in our times must know something about the budget of the city?

**Student:** Are you asking how it is or how it should be?

**Mr. Klein:** How it should be.

**Student:** How it should be. I was hoping that a man could have someone there who would be a reliable expert on—

**Mr. Klein:** All right. But this would be—here as well. . . . There's not a thought of asking anybody what the wealth is, how much and . . . . He just didn't *care*. Nor do you. Nor do you.

**Student:** Look. I'm just trying to think of an answer that Glaucon could have given Socrates at that time. Well, Glaucon—we just don't know how many dollars, how many garrisons there are. Glaucon could have given a very good answer . . . . [Laughter]

**LS:** But Glaucon knew *much* more of Athenian finance than he knew of the things to which you refer. So he couldn't have—that's much, much more reasonable to think of these matters at first blush than of this true statesman. Well, then—

[end of tape]

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<sup>1</sup> Deleted "has the time come?"

<sup>2</sup> Deleted "here"

<sup>3</sup> Deleted "by"

- 
- <sup>4</sup> Deleted “there is no”  
<sup>5</sup> Deleted “in”  
<sup>6</sup> Deleted “if”  
<sup>7</sup> Deleted “implied in”  
<sup>8</sup> Deleted “his”  
<sup>9</sup> Deleted “ruling”  
<sup>10</sup> Deleted “That”  
<sup>11</sup> Deleted “that”  
<sup>12</sup> Deleted “it”  
<sup>13</sup> Deleted “if he is”  
<sup>14</sup> Deleted “get”; moved “he can”  
<sup>15</sup> Deleted “being”  
<sup>16</sup> Deleted “chapter”  
<sup>17</sup> Deleted “in all these”  
<sup>18</sup> Deleted “The same would be”  
<sup>19</sup> Deleted “what he”  
<sup>20</sup> Deleted “They ruled”  
<sup>21</sup> Deleted “Peloponnesian War”  
<sup>22</sup> Deleted “the low”  
<sup>23</sup> Deleted “for”  
<sup>24</sup> Deleted “that are”  
<sup>25</sup> Deleted “and so they”  
<sup>26</sup> Deleted “in”  
<sup>27</sup> Deleted “as it”  
<sup>28</sup> Deleted “here comes Xenophon”  
<sup>29</sup> Deleted “they were”  
<sup>30</sup> Deleted “what question”  
<sup>31</sup> Deleted “by”  
<sup>32</sup> Deleted “in”  
<sup>33</sup> Deleted “that”

## Session 19: no date

[The previous session presumably covering Book III.7-13 is missing. The sound quality of this session is very poor]

**Leo Strauss:** Now we read last time the story of Socrates and Theodote, but let's consider first the context before we go on. In <sup>1</sup>Book 3, Socrates' conversations with people who long for the noble things, and when we read we observed an *ascent* from nameless people up to as remarkable a man as Charmides. But then we were expecting Plato, and this—he does not talk. So the peak of this . . . is missing. But in the next chapter, the eighth, we find a substitute for the peak: Aristippus, a philosopher; and then also <sup>2</sup>other people, people <sup>3</sup>who are hardly concerned with Socrates' philosophical questions. And then, thereafter, there is a descent in stages, and the first was to the [artists, craftsmen], this is something no one [connects with] philosophy, as you may know from Plato's *Republic*. And now let us look again at the beginning of <sup>4</sup>chapter 11.

“There was once a beautiful woman in this city, a woman whose name was Theodote, and of the kind who are together with him who persuades her.”<sup>i</sup> (II.11.1). So she had to be persuaded. And then someone of those present said something. Xenophon says ordinarily “of the companions”—*synontes*—but here he says *parontes* because, since he had used the term “being together,” *syneînai*, in connection with Theodote and her profession, it would be slightly improper to call the relations—Socrates and his companions—as *synontes*. But the term “to be together with” and the noun derivative from *parousia* was quite common. *Synousia* meant later on . . . because it is the kind of intimacy which is not of a different kind but . . . good. Now Theodote, you will see here from this early remark, was not alto . . . , was not together with everyone who *wished* to be together with her. She had to be persuaded. Now let us look at Socrates, Book 1, chapter six, paragraph five. Begin, yes.

**Reader:** ““Is it that those who take money are bound to carry out the work for which they get a fee, while I, because I refuse to take it, am not obliged to talk with anyone against my will?”” (I.6.5)

**LS:** Yes. To converse with anyone with whom I do not *wish* to suggests Socrates did not converse with everyone who wished to be together with him, just as Theodote was not together with everyone who *wished* to be together with her. Theodote had to be persuaded. Socrates had to be persuaded to be together with someone with whom he did not wish to be. Now I think this conversation with Theodote, which you may remember, is the only one showing when and how Socrates refused someone as a *synōn*, as a companion, as someone who wants to be together. That is here very elegantly done because if there had been some nice young man with great political or other ambition, then that would have been awkward, to deny it. But if he denied it to a woman like Theodote, that was not altogether inappropriate, especially if it is done with much kindness and delicacy as Socrates did it.

There's a Platonic dialogue, now generally regarded as spurious, the *Theages*, in which this subject comes up. A young man called Theages wants to be together with Socrates, and Socrates

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<sup>i</sup> Strauss's translation.



soon finds out that he wants to become, of course, a tyrant. There Socrates doesn't wish to be together with him, and then he says, first, that I can be together only with the people where there is an erotic relation. Theages and his father laugh at the old bearded Socrates that he could say such a thing. And thereupon Socrates gives another reason, and he says it's his *daimonion*: that if his *daimonion* doesn't approve of it, then he can't be together with him. So the *daimonion* is here used as a substitute, as a more credible substitute, for erotic—for eroticism. Erotic and *daimonion* are two different expressions, I think, of the same thing. And when they come, <sup>5</sup>these people are, as I would say, from upstate—you know, they are not from the more sophisticated part of Athens. Socrates has to tell them stories of his *daimonion* which are just fantastic: what [he has observed, what they said]. What he has predicted, of course—<sup>6</sup>in Sicily, and who would die there—and many other things. And so at least Theages and his father could not complain that Socrates did not accept him. <sup>7</sup>This dialogue is, as I said, generally regarded as spurious; but it gives, I think, <sup>8</sup>the same question which is also underlying this conversation. The conversation with Theodote follows immediately <sup>9</sup>the conversation with Pistias, the armor maker. Socrates could learn something from a competent breastplate maker about that man's art. He could not learn anything from a courtesan about her art or his, so I think that indicates again the descent in which we are engaged. And now we come to chapter 12, to which we turn now. Yes?

**Student:** It seems that the counterpart to refusing Theodote is his attractiveness for her, this sort of charm that he has, and so maybe making himself attractive to her in the first place. It's not as if he had, as if she had sought him out, he somehow makes himself attractive. I wonder if that's, whether there's any counterpart for that anywhere else, you could say, in Plato, or anything. It just seems to me—

**LS:** Ya, you mean that he seeks her, at least the beginning of it—

**Student:** Yeah, I mean I was recently reading Aristophanes' *Clouds* and you never see him being attractive or anything, nor do you see it in Plato, but here it's sort of unique, we see Socrates somehow being charming or attractive in some way.

**LS:** Is he so unattractive in Plato?

**Student:** Well, I can't really—that's, I don't know if there is any seduction as there is here.

**LS:** No, there is no such thing in Plato. The women in Plato are Diotima in *Symposium* and slightly at the end of the *Phaedo*, Xanthippe. And surely not a Theodote. But this is, I think, in accordance with Xenophon's general policy to present the same themes which Plato presents, but on a lower plane. That is not Diotima, but rather Theodote. But Diotima could clearly be a teacher in eroticism. Theodote is wholly unable to teach Socrates anything in that.

**Student:** I would have thought . . . that the true counterpart in Plato would have been some kind of, of seduction . . . like Theodote . . . noble young man; Alcibiades would be a counterpart to that.

**LS:** Ya, well, that is surely a good example, Alcibiades from the end of the *Symposium*.

**Student:** But we don't see that, you just hear about it. We don't see that, but we hear about it.

**LS:** Yes, but still, one can—well that, in a way . . . the question about the whole [speech], because Alcibiades was drunk and we don't know whether things happened exactly as Alcibiades says they did. But <sup>10</sup>I do not know if what I'm going to say is in any way relevant to your question. In the Platonic dialogues we can observe the following distinction: dialogues which Socrates enters under compulsion. Of course, he does not like this individual but, because it is a nice man, he talks to him. The simple example is the *Euthyphro* . . . . And on the other hand, at the other extreme are dialogues which Socrates eagerly seeks. The best example I think is the *Charmides*. Do you know it? At the very beginning. I do not know whether this is relevant to what you have now in mind.

**Student:** I'm not sure, let me think about it.

**LS:** Ya. Good. Now we turn to chapter 12.

**Reader:** “On noticing that Epigenes, one of his companions, was in poor condition, for a young man, he said—” (II.12.1)

**LS:** Yes, let us stop here for one moment. So here we come down still more. Previously we had reached the level of a beautiful woman, and now we come down to an ugly man, because a man who is in bad physical condition was regarded as ugly, surely not beautiful. He lacks the beauty of Theodote and, as it appears to me at least, he is indifferent, he's indifferent. He does not *long* for the beautiful things in the broader sense of the term, [in this case a] beautiful appearance. Yes?

**Reader:**

“You look as if you need exercise, Epigenes.”

“Well,” he replied, “I'm not an athlete, Socrates.” (III.12.1)

**LS:** The Greek word is *idiotēs*. The opposite of an expert—a complete layman regarding that.

**Reader:** ““Just as much as the competitors entered for Olympia,” he retorted. ‘Or do you count the life and death struggle with their enemies, upon which, it may be, the Athenians will enter, but a small thing? Why, many, thanks to their bad condition, lose their life in the perils of war or save it disgracefully: many, just for this same cause, are taken prisoners, and then either pass the rest of their days, perhaps, in slavery of the hardest kind, or, after meeting with cruel sufferings and paying, sometimes, more than they have, live on, destitute and in misery. Many, again, by their bodily weakness earn infamy, being thought cowards.’” (III.12.1-2)

**LS:** Yes, now let us stop here for one moment. You see, these are the bad effects of not taking care of one's body and <sup>11</sup>what happens in war. This happened to many people. The list is not exhaustive, <sup>12</sup>there remains the possibility that in spite of what the body feels, one could escape these things somehow, but perhaps only by good luck; and there one must speak, must speak of . . . .

**Reader:** ““Or do you despise these, the rewards of bad condition, and think that you can easily endure such things?”” (III.12.3)

**LS:** So in other words, we know you regard my previous considerations as utterly negligible.

**Reader:** ““And yet I suppose that what has to be borne by anyone who takes care to keep his body in good condition is far lighter and far pleasanter than these things. Or is it that you think bad condition healthier and generally more serviceable than good, or do you despise the effects of good condition? And yet the results of physical fitness are the direct opposite of those that follow from unfitness. The fit are healthy and strong; and many, as a consequence, save themselves decorously on the battle-field and escape all the dangers of war—”” (III.12.3-4)

**LS:** Yes, so this was said before, but we have already seen that Epigenes was not too greatly impressed by this consideration, and Socrates therefore enlarges in what comes now. Yes?

**Reader:** ““many help friends and do good to their country and for this cause earn gratitude; get great glory and gain very high honours, and for this cause live henceforth a pleasanter and better life, and leave to their children better means of winning a livelihood.”” (III.12.4)

**LS:** Yes, let us stop. Here [the word] he translates by “country” is again in Greek, fatherland, *patris*. This term occurs rather rarely in the *Memorabilia*, and hitherto it occurred only in political chapters, definitely political chapters. So I suggest this chapter is also a political chapter, and in that case it would be the only political chapter in this whole section, chapters eight to <sup>13</sup>14. Now Socrates has now produced his greater considerations than merely escaping death, or captivity, or the reputation for cowardice. Let us see how Epigenes reacts to that.

**Reader:** ““I tell you, because military training is not publicly recognised by the state, you must not make that an excuse for being a whit less careful in attending to it yourself. For you may rest assured that there is no kind of struggle, apart from war, and no undertaking in which you will be worse off by keeping your body in better fettle. For in everything that men do the body is useful; and in all uses of the body it is of great importance to be in as high a state of physical efficiency as possible.”” (III.12.5)

**LS:** Yes.

**Reader:** ““Why, even in the process of thinking, in which the use of the body seems to be reduced to a minimum—”” (III.12.6)

**LS:** Ya, that is not correctly translated: “Even in thinking or reasoning, in which you believe there is the least use of the body.” I think this supplies us with a key to Epigenes. He is so indifferent to the other considerations because he is only concerned with reason, and he thinks that since the body is irrelevant in this respect, he neglects his body. Yes?

**Reader:**

“it is matter of common knowledge that grave mistakes may often be traced to bad health. And because the body is in a bad condition, loss of memory, depression, discontent, insanity often

assail the mind so violently as to drive whatever knowledge it contains clean out of it. But a sound and healthy body is a strong protection to a man, and at least there is no danger then of such a calamity happening to him through physical weakness: on the contrary, it is likely that his sound condition will serve to produce effects the opposite of those that arise from bad condition. And surely a man of sense would submit to anything to obtain the effects that are the opposite of those mentioned in my list.”

“Besides, it is a disgrace to grow old through sheer carelessness before seeing what manner of man you may become by developing your bodily strength and beauty to their highest limit. But you cannot see that, if you are careless; for it will not come of its own accord.” (III.12.6-8)

**LS:** So Socrates tries to induce Epigenes to strive for the noble things, at least for *that* noble thing in which he should be interested because he is concerned with thinking: namely, a good [condition of the]<sup>14</sup> body. With the possible exception of the conversation with Charmides, this is the *only* conversation in which Socrates encourages someone to strive or long for the noble things. Is there anyone who would like to raise—?

**Student:** There’s one point which I’d like to ask after you said that Xenophon presents the same thing as Plato does but on a lower plane. Did Xenophon write the *Memorabilia* and the other Socratic writings of his about the same time that Plato wrote them or in reaction to them?

**LS:** No one knows. Probably at the same time, because they’re of the same generation. But at least I think the themes in it, at least in certain cases, especially regarding Xenophon’s *Apology*, Plato’s *Apology*, Xenophon’s *Symposium*, Plato’s *Symposium*, who took what from whom? Who made a dig at whom? That is impossible to say precisely. There is further—it is as possible that Xenophon took over something from Plato as that Plato took over something from Xenophon. And in addition, [there is]<sup>15</sup> the probability, which the classical scholars can say: <sup>16</sup>there might have been a *topos*, separate, which was used by some other earlier Socratic writer—perhaps someone like Antisthenes or something—from which both took. It is equally possible, however, that they didn’t need any literature for that, because there was some recollection of the Socratic doing or saying which they used. It’s impossible to say anything.

**Student:** Is there a relationship between the *eros* that is mentioned in the preceding chapter and the training of the body? I mean, it seems that the Socratic *eros* is something that’s not bodily, and yet somehow a training of the body might allow a man to pursue or to have the *eros* of Socrates. This is somehow tempered with something that might keep him from being . . . Is that possible?

**LS:** But—yes, but here there’s nothing said about the erotic implications of having a healthy body.

**Student:** No, there’s nothing said.

**LS:** Ya. No, I have to think about it. At least I don’t see where.

**Student:** Well, isn’t it possible that truly training the body in order to be moderate, if he pursued the *eros* of Socrates—

**LS:** Ya. But, as I'm saying, there may be some connection but <sup>17</sup>none suggests . . . . And I believe we somehow don't follow the drift of what Xenophon is driving at by saying . . . . Theodote is to that extent on a higher plane than Epigenes because she has a beautiful body—nothing else, as we have seen. And then we come to Epigenes, who does not even have a beautiful body and is even indifferent to the fact. And here we have the reason why he is so indifferent, but as Socrates says here, it is a bad reason, you know? If he says he has an interest in thinking he should be interested in not having headaches and other things which . . . him.

**Student:** I'm just thinking maybe in addition to that concern, I just . . . .

**LS:** Ya, perhaps. Ya, surely you can think of something, but this is not, I don't believe it . . . .

**Student:** Two questions: Did I hear you correctly to say that you thought this was the only place outside of Charmides where Socrates urges someone to strive for noble things?

**LS:** Ya. Well, in the other case—if you think, for example, the only other case, in the Third Book, he urges them to strive for—no, that is to *do* what is necessary to get the noble things. The longing for the noble things antedates Socrates' action. Ya?

**Student:** Yeah. In other words, with all of the others, he presupposes that they do long for the noble things and are less concerned about the means. Or at least that they think they do.

**LS:** The question arises only in the Third Book, where he compares . . . what Socrates is doing to those “quote longing for noble things” is mentioned [as a fact]. I mean, if you take other cases, like, say, the case of Crito in the Second Book, who is annoyed by a sycophant and Socrates is so clever to advise for him a counter-sycophant, and that is not the longing for beautiful things, noble things. But even in the case of Critobulus, his longing for the noble things antedates the conversation on friendship. But here Socrates tries to stir up . . . .

**Student:** I'm sorry. Is it fair to conclude from what you said that the character of the descent is mitigated by the introduction of the political?

**LS:** In other words, it is not simply a descent, this way from chapter eight. Yes, one can say there are other objections to it, for example, if my reading of chapter 10 is correct, Pistias would be—that would be on a higher level somehow than the others and that's the end of it. . . . And that is indicated. But descent, it can mean various things: it can mean the qualities of the interlocutor; it can mean the subject matter; and the subject of the Theodote conversation is doubtless more interesting than that of the Epigenes chapter, hm? And this, that one should take care of the body in order to be able to think—but it is trivial compared with what he said to Theodote.

**Student:** Well, we are somewhat accustomed, and I think you are too, of thinking of those who don't care too much for their bodies and care about their thinking as being on a rather higher plane, right?

**LS:** Ya, but still!

**Student:** Why? Because it's on a lower plane—

**LS:** [Exactly . . . .] Lower insofar as this is a trivial consideration, although this has . . . take Epigenes. But the observations which came up in the conversation with Theodote, the whole analog between her way of life and Socrates' and everything connected with . . . simply that is more interesting.

**Student:** Well, but the conditions of *episteme* can be quite interesting.

**LS:** Ya, but these—but what is said here is really a condition which is in no way *recondite*. As Socrates himself says: Who does not know that? Now there come two chapters which are unprecedented in Xenophon, chapters 13 and 14, and I think we should first read chapter 13 as a whole together to get an impression. . . .

**Reader:** “On a man who was angry because his greeting was not returned: ‘Ridiculous!’ he exclaimed; ‘you would not have been angry if you had met a man in worse health; and yet you are annoyed because you have come across someone with ruder manners!’” (III.13.1)

**LS:** Yes, now, it gets more . . . .

**Reader:**

“On another who declared that he found no pleasure in eating: ‘Acumenus,’ he said, ‘has a good prescription for that ailment.’ And when asked ‘What?’ he answered, ‘Stop eating; and you will then find life pleasanter, cheaper, and healthier.’ On yet another who complained that the drinking water at home was warm: ‘Consequently,’ he said, ‘when you want warm water to wash in, you will have it at hand.’”

“But it's too cold for washing,” objected the other.

“Then do your servants complain when they use it both for drinking and washing?”

“Oh no: indeed I have often felt surprised that they are content with it for both these purposes.”

“Which is the warmer to drink, the water in your house or Epidaurus water?”

“Epidaurus water.”

“And which is the colder to wash in, yours or Oropus water?”

“Oropus water.”

“Then reflect that you are apparently harder to please than servants and invalids.”

When someone punished his footman severely, he asked why he was angry with his man.

“Because he's a glutton and he's a fool,” said the other: “he's rapacious and he's lazy.”

“Have you ever considered, then, which deserves the more stripes, the master or the man?” (III.13.2-5)

**LS:** Youth.

**Reader:** Youth.

When someone was afraid of the journey to Olympia, he said:

“Why do you fear the distance? When you are at home, don't you spend most of the day in walking about? On your way there you will take a walk before lunch, and another before dinner, and then take a rest. Don't you know that if you put together the walks you take in five or six days, you can easily cover the distance from Athens to Olympia? It is more comfortable, too, to start a day early rather than a day late, since to be forced to make the stages of the journey unduly long is unpleasant; but to take a day extra on the way makes easy going. So it is better to hurry over the start than on the road.”

When another said that he was worn out after a long journey, he asked him whether he had carried a load.

“Oh no,” said the man; “only my cloak.”

“Were you alone, or had you a footman with you?”

“I had.”

“Empty-handed or carrying anything?”

“He carried the rugs and the rest of the baggage, of course.”

“And how has he come out of the journey?”

“Better than I, so far as I can tell.”

“Well then, if you had been forced to carry his load, how would you have felt, do you suppose?”

“Bad, of course; or rather, I couldn't have done it.”

“Indeed! Do you think a trained man ought to be so much less capable of work than his slave?” (III.13.6-7)

**LS:** That is something external . . . which comes out in the English translation, which remains uncertain. The name of Socrates doesn't occur. Generally speaking, the name of Socrates occurs, either used by Xenophon or used by the interlocutor. Even in the Epigines conversation, <sup>18</sup>where Xenophon does not speak of, use Socrates's name, Epigines uses it right in the middle, so that is an, it's an external . . . of this chapter. And in addition, these are all nameless people. Socrates is nameless, the people to whom he talks are as nameless as the people to whom he talked at the beginning of the Third Book. At the beginning, in the first conversation of the Third Book, this young man who wanted—who Socrates advised to take lessons in strategy with Dionysodorus, he is explicitly called a companion, *synōn*, of Socrates. Here nothing is said about *synontes*, that these men were companions, ya, but the subject is still that they were annoyed for trifling things and Socrates shows them how unreasonable they were. It is possible of course that I have overlooked it. I've always found these chapters the most difficult ones to understand in the whole of the *Memorabilia*. But I have now settled down to this provisional solution, that the solution to that is the place where they occur: the end of this Book which will become more clear when we begin the Fourth. Or did you . . .

**Mr. Klein:** The reason Socrates here, that is Socrates . . . doesn't like people complaining about these things—

**LS:** Ya.

**Mr. Klein:** Those who complain—

**LS:** Ya.

**Mr. Klein:** But is that right? How . . . well, he's a bad man. . . .

**LS:** Ya, ya, sure. No, but on the other hand I would also have to say one doesn't have to be a Socrates to give such advice.

**Mr. Klein:** Yeah. But historically . . . .

**LS:** Ya, Anstisthenes, or . . . the next chapter is— Yes?

**Student:** There is a lot of naming of . . . .

**LS:** Yes, yes. Ya. You mean Acumenus and the two waters and then Olympia?

**Student:** Yeah, and Athens.

**LS:** Ya.

**Mr. Klein:** The only thing that I can think of here. What . . . think of this, Xenophon doesn't want to miss any situation in which he cannot make some point . . . . Like a funny one, like a funny point . . . .

**LS:** That is, what he says himself in the beginning of the Fourth Book: he was useful in every matter and every way. Now let us read the next section, hm?

**Reader:**

Whenever some of the members of a dining-club brought more meat than others, Socrates would tell the waiter either to put the small contribution into the common stock or to portion it out equally among the diners. So the high batteners felt obliged not only to take their share of the pool, but to pool their own supplies in return; and so they put their own supplies also into the common stock. And since they thus got no more than those who brought little with them, they gave up spending much on meat.

He observed on one occasion that one of the company at dinner had ceased to take bread, and ate the meat by itself. Now the talk was of names and the actions to which they are properly applied. "Can we say, my friends," said Socrates, "what is the nature of the action for which a man is called greedy? For all, I presume, eat meat with their bread when they get the chance: but I don't think there is so far any reason for calling them greedy?"

"No, certainly not," said one of the company." (III.14.1-2)

**LS:** Said one of those present, *parontes*, these are not *synontes* but *parontes* and, as he said at the beginning of this paragraph, *syndeipnountes*: people who *dine* together, not people who *are* together.



**Reader:** “‘Well, suppose he eats the meat alone, without the bread, not because he's in training, but to tickle his palate, does he seem a greedy fellow or not?’ ‘If not, it's hard to say who does,’ was the reply. Here another of the company queried—”

**LS:** . . . passage, ya.

**Reader:**

“And he who eats a scrap of bread with a large helping of meat?”

“He too seems to me to deserve the epithet,” said Socrates. “Aye, and when others pray for a good wheat harvest, he, presumably, would pray for a good meat supply.”

“The young man, guessing that these remarks of Socrates applied to him, did not stop eating his meat, but took some bread with it. When Socrates observed this, he cried: “Watch the fellow, you who are near him, and see whether he treats the bread as his meat or the meat as his bread.” (III.14.3-4)

**LS:** Yes. There's another point here [by] which he indicates that it is a higher section: the talk was about names, what is and isn't an *opsophagos*, a greedy eater, and . . . but it is only here that . . . Yes?

**Reader:** “On another occasion he noticed one of the company—”

**LS:** “He observed fellow diners,” not *synontes*.

**Reader:**

at dinner tasting several dishes with each bite of bread.

“Can you imagine,” he asked, “a meal more extravagant and more ruinous to the victuals than his who eats many things together, and crams all sorts of sauces into his mouth at once? At any rate by mixing more ingredients than the cooks, he adds to the cost, and since he mixes ingredients that they regard as unsuitable in a mixture, if they are right, then he is wrong and is ruining their art.”

“Yet it is surely ridiculous for a master to obtain highly skilled cooks, and then, though he claims no knowledge of the art, to alter their confections? There's another drawback, too, attaching to the habit of eating many things together. For if many dishes are not provided, one seems to go short because one misses the usual variety: whereas he who is accustomed to take one kind of meat along with one bit of bread can make the best of one dish when more are not forthcoming.” (III.14.5-6)

**LS:** By the way, in the proceeding speech, in paragraph two, the man who ate the meat itself by himself: that is the famous Platonic *auto kath'auto*. Whether that is alluded to here is hard to say. Pardon? You don't believe it? I regard it as highly plausible. So now let's read the rest.

**Reader:** “He used to say too that the term ‘good feeding’ in Attic was a synonym for ‘eating.’ The ‘good’ in the compound implied the eating of food that could harm neither body nor soul and was not hard to come by. Thus he attributed even good feeding to sober livers.” (III.14.7)

**LS:** So this is the last at the end, and here I believe we see something of the overall direction. These people, the subject of the . . . chapters, we recognize them . . .

**Student:** But I mean this is simply sort of a joke, but what you—I mean, if one takes what you’re hinting at, which you hinted at earlier, one might think that the meat is the *eidos* and he’s warning you that you can’t get the *eidos* without also considering the *hule* that goes along with it. [Strauss and students laughing and talking simultaneously]

**LS:** It would not be completely apparent with what Xenophon hints at. No, but something then . . . is superficial. Here in this case, Socrates speaks only about forms of incontinence, especially incontinence with regard to food. So the Third Book ends with the subject continence, with which this whole section—not only of the Third Book but already in chapter three of the First Book, if not at the very beginning—is continence, is a difference. The first subject of the *Memorabilia* was *piety*, not continence, hence the discussion there . . . *piety*.

**Student:** Is that true about the thirteenth chapter as well as the fourteenth chapter?

**LS:** No, that is not—ya, but in the wider sense, I mean, there is another thing which [is] akin to continence, which is called by Xenophon endurance, *karteria*. To that extent, yes.

**Student:** Is the distinction between endurance and continence in Xenophon the same as between continence and moderation in Aristotle?

**LS:** Oh no. No, no.

**Student:** There is no—

**LS:** No, endurance has to do—that is simple. Continence has to do primarily with food . . . and endurance has to do with such things like heat and cold and so on, ya? So they are akin but they are not. No, this distinction as the . . . distinction does not exist in Xenophon except . . . Xenophon makes the distinction, never explicit, between continence and moderation. Aristotle makes such a distinction and Aristotle means something different from the distinction than Xenophon does. That Aristotle’s continence, Aristotle’s moderation is a bit more immoderation, lack of moderation. Xenophon’s moderation is the opposite of *hubris* or madness. It points in a very different direction.

**Mr. Klein:** . . . completely consider chapters 11, 12, 13, 14 . . . important they have in common one, one general, general theme. That is the body.

**LS:** Ya.

**Mr. Klein:** In many different ways, in many different ways, but . . . in which—

**LS:** To some extent even in 10.

**Mr. Klein:** Yes.

**LS:** Yep, I mean the artists, the artisans.

**Jacob Klein:** Yeah, yeah.

**LS:** Ya, because they imitate bodies or present you—

**Jacob Klein:** Yes, but the question is: Why does Xenophon do that? Does he want to say, as he seems to be saying in, in chapter 12: don't neglect the body? Does he mean, does he want to imply that, or does he want to evoke in a very, very subtle way the consideration of the body at all?

**LS:** I don't believe the latter. I don't believe—there's really so obviously a reason to take care of the body, and he had given, had cited, statements of Socrates earlier. And Socrates did not—I mean, he had no more needs than to eat, not neglect—

**Jacob Klein:** You see, it is not—because I have no idea.

**LS:** Ya.

**Jacob Klein:** It is not impossible that they . . . of the *Memorabilia*, the book [written] for people to know something about that Socrates. Now many people, many—as you yourself said—would say what is said here: Don't neglect the body, that's reasonable, and so on. So he's saying: You people who say that, Socrates said that too.

**LS:** . . . Or what do you mean?

**Jacob Klein:** No, I mean people who might have the general view that Socrates is a man who didn't think of the body at all well, in the way in which Plato speaks of the body.

**LS:** Ya, ya, sure. But ya, there is no suggestion of this type of—

**Jacob Klein:** Socrates says: <sup>19</sup>I can show you that Socrates was as reasonable as you are, but as—

**LS:** But what?

**Jacob Klein:** As reasonable as you are. But it is said with the tongue in his cheek. It's possible, I have no idea.

**LS:** Ya, and there is one thing which is connected to that: Xenophon's Socrates doesn't say a word about the immortality of the soul. His silence, Socrates . . . that this belongs to a different world than the universe of Socrates. Ya, well, at any rate, these are nice stories, and I think that, I believe the simplest explanation that the movement of Book 3 has this form. And it reads as if it is the ending, and therefore it is a surprise that the book goes on. And there is something which, something entirely new which begins now, the Fourth Book, and we must see what that is. But

before we turn <sup>20</sup>to Book 4, I would like to know whether there are any points you would like to raise in regards to chapter three, or for that matter earlier chapters.

**Student:** Well, I'd like to know, is it possible—it seems to me that if you eat certain things, if you don't take care of the body, you would have headaches and not be able to think and so—

**LS:** Or even if you eat too little or too much, ya.

**Student:** Too much, yeah. And therefore if a man would neglect his body for the purpose of being a philosopher, he would defeat himself.

**LS:** Ya, all right.

**Student:** All right. It also seems that by placing certain things in your mouth it is possible to damage your soul.

**LS:** Such as what?

**Student:** Sauces.

**LS:** I see, ya, in the dialogue.

**Student:** In the sense that the—and also beside the simple damage to the soul of the individual, there would be damage to that individual's ability to be dialectical. It would seem to be . . .

**LS:** Ya, let me—if Xenophon, to use a simple expression, the reasoning is impeded if you don't care and don't take care of your body.

**Student:** But I was thinking that maybe there were two different themes. The one was that the reasoning is impaired, and the other is that not having the reasoning impaired, it seems that the *eros* that—

**LS:** No, don't say anything of *eros* now. But, for example, you will not be able to defend your city, you will not be able to have an honorable reputation and live as an outstanding man. But we have seen already that these considerations were . . . to Epigenes, and the only indication we have as to what its purpose . . . is his belief that reasoning does not need the body. In the context, that means . . . everything that hinders it.

**Student:** Isn't reasoning something that would be, that would transcend individual human beings, and then they would somehow be able to communicate—

**LS:** Perhaps. How could we know that Epigenes has put sufficient thought as to what is required?

**Student:** I am just trying to understand the last part about the needs. It would seem that the more and more he would be attached to his own body, that he would be greedy to put more meat into

his mouth, the more that he would feel that [attachment], the less he would be able to get away from the body.

**LS:** In the case of Epigenes there is no question about his being incontinent in any sense. He was very intemperate when—

**Student:** But what about this man here, where is the evidence?

**LS:** Here the . . . these were people who were incontinent.

**Student:** Isn't there a difference between what's happening with Epigenes and what's happening with these people? Isn't this a higher and more destructive thing because it damages the soul? That is, what happens with Epigenes damages the mind.

**LS:** Ya, but Epigenes has after all the notion that food and dinners are of no interest to him compared with reason, whereas these diners think of nothing but dining.

**Student:** Isn't that worse?

**LS:** Yes, surely, that is worse.

**Student:** So then in a sense there is an ascent here, isn't there? They are going back up—

**LS:** Yes, if they are . . . .

**Student:** Things that are being damaged are higher and higher. That's why—

[break in tape]

**LS:** Now, Mr. Hill?

**Student:** Can Theodote do something good for the state?

**LS:** Pardon? Can Theodote—

**Student:** do something good for the state?

**LS:** Probably not. She's too expensive! [Laughter] As a camp follower.

**Student:** . . . .

**LS:** If you look it from a strictly practical point of view [laughter], she is too expensive as a camp follower. And for generals, she would be all right for generals because she might have been . . . . There was no reference to her usefulness to the city. There is only in a negative way—

Socrates does not blame her for what she's doing. He doesn't say that this is bad and so you should stop, like this German high school teacher to Marlene Dietrich.<sup>ii</sup> [Laughter]

**Student:** I thought she might be able to teach the art of persuasion to important people.

**LS:** She can't persuade. She's completely helpless.

**Student:** If she, if Socrates is successful with her, she may—well, men may have to do a lot of persuading in order to have her. And—

**LS:** Ya, but apparently the test—the Greek word for persuasion, *peitho*, is used in the following sense . . . to persuade someone with money. That's the Greek expression bribing someone. So that can mean . . . . But surely she is not—I think she would be, as we have seen, she is only unable to persuade except by her bodily attractions, and that can perhaps be more persuasive than many speeches. That's another matter. Yes?

**Student:** The fact that you just mentioned, the fact that Socrates doesn't blame her for what she's doing. Do you mean by that, that implies that he is guilty of at least condoning—

**LS:** Guilty of what?

**Student:** Does that imply that he was according to citizens of Athens guilty of condoning a certain kind of corruption?

**LS:** No, no. That wasn't. Yes, that they are not how . . . did not have a . . . [laughter]. But on the other hand, it is clear she was not a common prostitute, that's perfectly clear. Shall we try to begin . . . hmm?

**Reader:** "Socrates was so useful in all circumstances—" (IV.1.1)

**LS:** Yes, so useful. In this sense, Socrates was useful in every matter and in every manner. That is . . . . I mean, in all things, whether he's dining, whether he's together with Theodote, whether he talks to Charmides, whether he talks to Aristippus, or whatever he—in every matter and in every manner. Yes?

**Reader:** "that any observer gifted with ordinary perception can see that nothing was more useful than the companionship of Socrates—" (IV.1.1)

**LS:** Than to be together with Socrates.

**Reader:** "and time spent with him in any place and in any circumstances." (IV.1.1)

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<sup>ii</sup> Strauss refers to a scene in the film *Der blaue Engel* (*The Blue Angel*) (1930), dir. Josef von Sternberg.

**LS:** And . . . in any matter. So that there is a slight change. Here is the reference to—the matter is the same, but now he says not only the manner and replaces the manner by place, and we have seen that the place is of some importance because Socrates is useful in all kinds of places. Yes?

**Reader:** “The very recollection of him in absence brought no small good to his constant companions and followers; for even in his light moods—” (IV.1.1)

**LS:** . . . Now he brings something new. That is the first addition. So that even to *remember* him when he was absent had an effect on those who were accustomed to be together with him <sup>21</sup>and accepted him. Ah, so even remembering, and we know that Xenophon is here remembering, so Xenophon is benefited as it were by writing, as we [said]<sup>22</sup>. And now here comes the second addition.

**Reader:** “for even in his light moods they gained no less from his society than when he was serious.” (IV.1.1)

**LS:** That is a central point. For even when he was in jest, he was no less useful than when he was serious. That seems to be an ascent from his absence, memory, to his jesting. His jesting is also a kind of absence, because those who weren’t [aware] that he is jesting. For him, he is absent even while he is present. And then he gives an example of Socrates’ jest.

**Reader:** “Thus he would often say he was ‘in love’—”

**LS:** With someone.

**Student:** “but clearly his heart was set not on those who were fair to outward view, but on those whose souls excelled in goodness.”

**LS:** . . . no—those whose souls, whose soul, but the souls of those who were by nature good with regard to goodness. . . . But they are fitted by nature for goodness. This is the single example which Xenophon gives of Socrates’ jesting.

**Reader:** “These excellent beings he recognized by their quickness to learn—”

**LS:** These good natures is the Greek word. Perhaps we should leave it at that, although it is a bit strange in English. “The good natures he recognized.”

**Reader:** “These good natures he recognized by their quickness to learn whatever subject they studied, ability to remember what they learned, and desire for every kind of knowledge on which depend good management of a household and estate and tactful dealing with men and the affairs of men.” (IV.1.2)

**LS:** Yes. So there are good natures, that we must we keep in mind. Those who learn quickly and whatever they apply themselves to, those who remember, and those who desire <sup>23</sup>*all* pieces of learning from which one can inhabit a house nobly. It’s not household, *oikos*, it’s *oikia*. Who inhabit the house nobly and the *city*, certain men who supply, inhabit, and altogether use human

things and human beings, human affairs well. Yes. This is Xenophon's simple definition of a good nature. Perhaps you recognize a certain resemblance between that and what Plato says about the nature of the philosopher [in] the *Republic*. [This is] much less elaborate and *seemingly* much more limited, especially if one understands it as Marchant understands it, that all pieces of knowledge through which one can manage the household, that is, I say, that's not there, "through which one can inhabit one's household." That's something different than manage and inhabit the polis. One can inhabit a polis well, nobly, even if one does not manage the polis, and one then does not have any share of its management.

**Reader:** "For education would make such beings not only happy in themselves, and successful in the [inhabiting]of their households, but capable of conferring happiness on their fellow-men and on states alike." (IV.1.2)

**LS:** So their education makes them good householders. They do not claim necessarily by *nature* a desire for knowledge of economy, economy in the Greek sense of the word economy.

**Reader:** "His method of approach varied." (IV.1.2)

**LS:** May I only make one point. This—Xenophon had made no remark . . . whatever, although there were some hints . . . but, at the latest at this point, the reader of the *Memorabilia* must look back and say, were all the people to whom, with whom Socrates conversed in the first three Books good natures, or who? Because one can imagine that the man to whom he gave his advice in chapters seven to ten of the Second Book . . . Euthēros and others, that they were not good natures. And that would also apply, I think, to Crito. Good nature does not mean something like good natured. Gifted, as it were, would come nearer to what Xenophon means. Yes, and now he makes an important supplement to what he said. That's not merely a supplement, it is a third additional remark, additional to all that he said in the first three Books. Yes?

**Reader:** "To those who thought themselves possessed of natural endowments—" (IV.1.3)

**LS:** No, no, the last sentence. "But he did not approach." I'm sorry. "But he did not approach all men in the same manner." Is this here?

**Reader:** "His method of approach varied."

**LS:** Yes, all right, but he did not approach all men in the same manner. That is of very great importance. He approached different people differently. One can say this followed from the fact that he conversed not only with those whom he loved—these are the good natures, we know—but conversed also with the people whom he did not love, and yet he approached them differently. Now let us see what this says.

**Reader:** "To those who thought themselves possessed of natural endowments and despised learning—" (IV.1.3)

**LS:** Who thought, ya.



**Reader:**

he explained that the greater the natural gifts, the greater is the need of education; pointing out that thoroughbreds by their spirit and mettle develop into serviceable and splendid creatures, if they are broken in as colts, but if unbroken, prove intractable and sorry jades; and high-bred puppies, keen workers and good tacklers of game, make first-rate hounds and useful dogs, if well trained, but, if untrained, turn out stupid, crazy, disobedient brutes. It is the same with human beings.

The most highly gifted, the youths of ardent soul, capable of doing whatever they attempt, if educated and taught their duty grow into excellent and useful men; for manifold and great are their good deeds. But untrained and untaught, these same become utterly evil and mischievous; for without knowledge to discern their duty, they often put their hand to vile deeds, and through the very grandeur and vehemence of their nature, they are uncontrollable and intractable— (IV.1.3-4)

**LS:** Yes. But this is . . . Are they same as good natures?

**Student (Reader):** Aren't they the ones that are most important to consider because good natures are going to be *sophron* compared to—?

**LS:** Yes, that's all right, but we won't understand the . . . That may be very important from another point of view but here, in the first case—are they good natures as good natures was defined before?

**Student:** Their desires seem somewhat more extravagant than the desires of the people described before.

**LS:** Ya, they did not—I think that the question is settled by the fact [that] in paragraph three, near the beginning, he says [that] they despise learning. There might be a way—and he doesn't say that they were good natures, he says that they *thought* themselves by nature good, and then a bit later he says: those natures which *seem* to be or are *thought* to be the best, they need the highest degree of education. So this is one kind of men, however interesting and important they may be, who are not good natures because they are not attracted by learning. And now we come to another kind in paragraph five.

**Reader:**

Those who prided themselves on riches and thought they had no need of education, supposing that their wealth would suffice them for gaining the objects of their wishes and winning honour among men, he admonished thus. “Only a fool,” he said, “can think it possible to distinguish between things useful and things harmful without learning: only a fool can think that without distinguishing these he will get all he wants by means of his wealth and be able to do what is expedient: only a simpleton can think that without the power to do what is expedient he is doing well and has made good or sufficient provision for his life: only a simpleton can think that by his wealth alone without knowledge he will be reputed good at something, or will enjoy a good reputation without being reputed good at anything in particular. (IV.1.5)

**LS:** Are they good natures, I mean . . . Are they good natures?

**Student:** I didn't hear what you said afterwards?

**LS:** [Emphasizing] Are they good natures? I ask.

**Student:** It seems they're not, for the reason you mentioned before, that they have no love for learning.

**LS:** Because <sup>24</sup>they lack even the *appearance* of being good natures in contradistinction to the first ones, yes. This is I think simple. Now we come to the interesting ones.

**Reader:** "I will now show his method of dealing with those who thought they had received the best education, and prided themselves on wisdom." (IV.2.1)

**LS:** Yes, now this is a crucial question: Are they *good* natures? That's absolutely crucial for understanding the whole Fourth Book and the whole of the *Memorabilia*. Are they who think they have received the best education and think highly of their wisdom . . . ?

**Student:** To the extent that they—well, I'm not sure, but to the extent that they think they possess wisdom and have received the best education they possibly can, then it would seem to imply that their desire for learning is diminished.

**LS:** It could be. But it all depends on what they understand by wisdom and how they go about in acquiring their wisdom, ya? This is another point. Now let us see. Let's read slowly.

**Reader:** "He was informed that Euthydemus, the handsome, had formed a large collection of the works of celebrated poets and professors—"

**LS:** Don't stop here.

**Reader:** "and therefore supposed himself to be a prodigy of wisdom—"

**LS:** All right, here. On the basis of that, ya. Yes.

**Reader:** "for his age, and was confident of surpassing all competitors in power of speech and action. At present—" (IV.2.1)

**LS:** Ya, let us stop here. That is, Euthydemus is a representative and in fact the sole representative of type number three. So he has acquired knowledge, wisdom, by collecting books—and I suppose he also has looked into them. That is possible. But even the with desire for knowledge, we can say that it's somewhat perverted in a sense, and therefore I hold for the view that Euthydemus is not a good nature. And that is some importance because it follows—if that is true, <sup>25</sup>it follows that Xenophon is silent on those Socrates approached, the good natures. He doesn't give here an example, and we would have to find out whether there are some conversations earlier which were conversations with good natures. We do not know that. Now

almost all conversations in the Fourth Book are with Euthydemus. It is always the same character. This is the other striking difference between Book 4 and the earlier [ones].

**Student:** Isn't possible, I mean, just on the basis of the fact that Euthydemus was describing what learning and wisdom was, that he didn't have a desire for learning and—

**LS:** Ya, but still, <sup>26</sup>if he had a good nature, he would have had some dissatisfaction with this kind of thing—even if he had been brought up in a culture, as they say, in which the collection of the books of the most famous poets in the land is regarded as *the* way of acquiring wisdom. If he had such a nature, he would have developed some dissatisfaction.

**Student:** Yeah, but does Euthydemus show us such dissatisfaction in the course of Book 4, or does he remain confident?

**LS:** Remain?

**Student:** Does Euthydemus remain confident through the course of Book 4 that he actually does possess wisdom and shows no sign of being dissatisfied with this method he has now fixed upon?

**LS:** I'm sorry, I don't hear you that well, but I will try to give an answer to the extent to which I understood you. He was apparently perfectly satisfied with himself, with the wisdom which he possessed, with his possession of wisdom. And I believe, according to Xenophon's indication of what a good nature is, he was not a good nature. One could say—I mean, that is not decisive; one could say he was learned in books, and therefore that could not—the first two kinds were not concerned with learning at all. But they were not necessarily fools, simpletons. But he was I think a great fool.

Now there is another point which we have to consider at this point. Book 4 is the only Book, possibly, in which Xenophon presents the Socratic teaching in an orderly manner, from its beginning to its end, somewhat—as you can imagine, somewhat cursorily, but that he does as you will see. So now this is the strange thing. Here, in the only Book in which he presents the Socratic teaching in an orderly manner, he presents that teaching in the perspective of Euthydemus, with a view to Euthydemus. So we have to as it were make a kind of subtraction, perhaps a more subtle operation than mere subtraction, in order to see how that Socratic teaching would look like given <sup>27</sup>to another kind of man than Euthydemus. Certain things in Book 4 are repetitions from earlier [Books], but now the perspective is different because here that is now a Euthydemian teaching, an addition that was not before. By the way, there is one dialogue in Book 4 which is not with Euthydemus, and that is [in] chapter four, with the famous Hippias. Now why has Xenophon inserted that dialogue with Hippias into this otherwise purely Euthydemian section? We cannot say before we come to it, but this is perhaps a more obvious difficulty regarding . . . . Now where were we? Here. Good. Let us put—he wants to show his wisdom. And what did he say?

**Reader:** “At present, Socrates observed, he did not enter the market-place owing to his youth, but when he wanted to get anything done, he would be found sitting in a saddler's shop—” (IV.2.1)

**LS:** Yes, let us say in a bridle maker's shop, which is more literal and has more meaning. Perhaps he needed a bridle. [Laughter] Okay.

**Reader:**

So, to make an opening, Socrates went to this shop with some of his companions.

At the first visit, one of them asked:

“Was it by constant intercourse with some wise man or by natural ability that Themistocles stood out among his fellow-citizens as the man to whom the people naturally looked when they felt the want of a great leader?”

In order to set Euthydemus thinking, Socrates said:

“If in the minor arts great achievement is impossible without competent masters, surely it is absurd to imagine that the art of statesmanship, the greatest of all accomplishments, comes to a man of its own accord.” (IV.2.1-2)

**LS:** So this also was the question <sup>28</sup>regarding Themistocles. Now what do we know about Themistocles, about his learning the art of statesmanship?

**Student:** Didn't he leave Athens?

**LS:** What?

**Student:** Didn't he leave Athens at one point?

**LS:** Yes, sure, but was a traitor later—or rather, compelled to be a traitor, for sure. No, but we are now concerned with this question: Where did he *learn*? Did he take lessons in statesmanship?

**Student:** Well, he seemed to learn in practice.

**LS:** Ya, but there is a more precise statement in Thucydides when he describes his character in the First Book.

**Student:** You mean when he talks that—

**LS:** No, no, when he speaks in the story of the Fifty Years War,<sup>iii</sup> and then he says that he has no educational learning at all, it was only his nature. <sup>29</sup>Xenophon surely knew that, and this being a view which was . . . based on the tradition. And so whether this implies a criticism of Themistocles, I really do not know, but in an ultimate sense, yes, just as in Plato, where not only Pericles but also Themistocles is being mocked. Yes?

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<sup>iii</sup> Thucydides, I.138.

**Reader:** “Some time afterwards, meeting Euthydemus again, he saw that he was reluctant to join the circle and anxious not to betray any admiration for the wisdom of Socrates—” (IV.2.3)

**LS:** Ya, that he admired Socrates on account of wisdom, ya.

**Reader:**

“Well, gentlemen,” said he, “when our friend Euthydemus has attained his full powers, and some question of policy is before the Assembly, he won't be backward in offering advice: that is obvious from his behaviour. I fancy he has prepared a noble exordium to his addresses, with due care not to give the impression that he is indebted to anyone for his knowledge.” (IV.2.3)

**LS:** “That he had learned anything from someone else.”

**Student:** “No doubt—”

**LS:** He is—I mean, Euthydemus is concerned with *appearing* not to have learned from anyone. And therefore he has not learned anything, he has only collected the books. And he may have looked in them in a . . . manner. Yes?

**Reader:**

No doubt he will begin his speech with this introduction:

“Men of Athens, I have never yet learnt anything from anyone, nor when I have been told of any man's ability in speech and in action, have I sought to meet him, nor have I been at pains to find a teacher among the men who know. On the contrary, I have constantly avoided learning anything of anyone, and even the appearance of it. Nevertheless I shall recommend to your consideration anything that comes into my head.” [Laughter]

This exordium might be adapted so as to suit candidates for the office of public physician. They might begin their speeches in this strain:

“Men of Athens, I have never yet studied medicine, nor sought to find a teacher among our physicians; for I have constantly avoided learning anything from the physicians, and even the appearance of having studied their art. Nevertheless I ask you to appoint me to the office of a physician, and I will endeavour to learn by experimenting on you.” [Laughter] (IV.2.4-5)

**LS:** In the case of physician, it is more hopelessly absurd than in the case of the statesman. Yes.

**Reader:** “The exordium set all the company laughing.” (IV.2.5)

**LS:** All present, not the companions here. They laughed. *They* laughed. Socrates doesn't laugh. He doesn't even smile, except after his trial, and Xenophon tells you that. Ya?

**Reader:**

Now when it became evident that Socrates had gained the attention of Euthydemus [laughter], but that Euthydemus still avoided breaking silence himself, and thought that he assumed an air of prudence by remaining dumb, Socrates wanted to put an end to that affectation.

“How strange it is,” he said, “that those who want to play the harp or the flute, or to ride or to get skill in any similar accomplishment, work hard at the art they mean to master, and not by

themselves but under the tuition of the most eminent professors, doing and bearing anything in their anxiety to do nothing without their teachers' guidance, just because that is the only way to become proficient: and yet, among those who want to shine as speakers in the Assembly and as statesmen, there are some who think that they will be able to do so on a sudden, by instinct, without training or study. Yet surely these arts are much the harder to learn; for many more are interested in them and far fewer succeed. Clearly then these arts demand a longer and more intense application than the others.” (IV.2.6-7)

**LS:** Yes, this is the second stage in this peroration. First, we have ridiculed him in <sup>30</sup>the worst way. And now he is, he does no longer—I do this, because he has seen . . . Euthydemus listen, and abandon the affectation not to listen. Yes?

**Reader:** “For a time, then, Socrates continued to talk in this strain, while Euthydemus listened. But on finding him more tolerant of his conversation and more attentive, Socrates went alone to the bridler’s—” (IV.2.8)

**LS:** Ya. Let us stop at this point. Then Socrates went *alone* to the bridler, bridle maker’s shop; and then “he started a conversation” means strictly private conversation between Socrates and Euthydemus . . . no doubt because Socrates did no longer wish to humiliate Euthydemus, which was necessary during that stage. Now at present he is . . . But whether that is supposed to, whether this strictly private conversation, the only strictly private conversation in the *Memorabilia*, is that not also private for other reasons? That we can still find out through reading it. And that . . . I think we’ll stop at this point. We have a few more minutes if there is any point which you would like to raise? No? Good.

**Student (Reader):** I was wondering about what you were saying about that first paragraph of the Fourth Book, where he says that when he was playing he was not less profitable to those who spend their time with him than when he was serious—

**LS:** Ya.

**Same Student:** that, throughout the spectrum, that his play, not less—I mean, it even leaves open the possibility of it being more—

**LS:** At least no less. Ya, ya. And does not the example show that Socrates was useful, and not a little bit useful in his jesting? After all, in this connection when Xenophon explains his jesting, he states the most important benefit.

**Same Student:** You know, but I wonder whether it’s not pointing to something that I think came up once before: that when he is *serious*, he might not even be so useful or, in other words, I wonder whether he’s not pointing to the fact that when he’s most serious, he may be only helping himself?

**LS:** Perhaps, to the extent to which any talking <sup>31</sup>might have effect the betterment of the talker compared with his strictly private thought. Do you agree with that?

**Student:** Yes, yes.

**Different Student:** I was just curious, I was wondering if you could explain why Socrates takes such trouble with Euthydemus if he's—why he takes so much trouble with Euthydemus. He seems to have a campaign to get him to listen.

**LS:** Of course, Euthydemus is perhaps—because we all are Euthydemuses to some extent. Some more than others.

**Student:** In what respect do you mean that?

**LS:** Believing to be wise without being wise, and believing if we have collected many books or even read them we are wise? Yes.

**Student:** But if that's true of everyone, why pick this particular man to engage in a conversation? I'm not sure that's clear, what I mean—

**LS:** Well, it is perhaps unknown to these innumerable Euthydemuses in this metaphorical sense, whether Euthydemus is a better—at least he may be the typical, let us say, the typical case of the . . . of the typical addressee of Socrates. Let us assume there were two addressees, two typical. The first are the good natures. That is excluded by what we have seen. And so, as it were, the only one which can be presented is the <sup>32</sup>second kind, the Euthydemuses. And Xenophon does not wish to present Socrates engaged in the higher type, say, the level of Plato. You see that he does not even present himself engaged in a Socratic conversation. The only thing we find is this conversation, that Socrates treats him as badly as Aristophanes' Socrates treats Strepsiades. You fool, remember? And of course there is Plato, but Xenophon doesn't give us a serious version, a conversation between him and Socrates, except if you call that conversation in the *Anabasis* where Socrates sends Xenophon to Delphi to find out about whether he should go to Cyrus and on the expedition. And Xenophon goes to Delphi and asks the god to whom he should sacrifice to make that expedition most propitiously; and Socrates told him that he didn't ask the god at all, you made your decision. And now after you have done that [LS chuckles], you have to sacrifice to that god, whoever, whichever. Ya, he doesn't mention who the god was, Apollo, which he recommended, and that the long story later . . . as far as Zeus is concerned, version of . . . which . . . one of them. So that is the point. And if you say that famous name, Hippias, then we will see in chapter [four]<sup>33</sup> that's very different. And then there is no dialogue with Protagoras or Gorgias or . . . you know, with whom Socrates talks in the Platonic dialogues. There is no dialogue between Socrates and great poets.

**Student:** Could you repeat that?

**LS:** And great poets. And ya, Alcibiades, we have only read conversations with a nineteen-year-old Alcibiades with Pericles, not conversations . . . I think Xenophon has excluded, and the nearest approximation in the *Memorabilia* is Charmides, Charmides, perhaps . . . But this very question cannot be raised without what we recently discussed . . . if not understood, this little thing: he did not approach all men in the same manner, and what he understands by a good nature.

[end of tape]

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- <sup>1</sup> Deleted "the, in"
- <sup>2</sup> Deleted "with"
- <sup>3</sup> Deleted "people of"
- <sup>4</sup> Deleted "chapter nine"
- <sup>5</sup> Deleted "when"
- <sup>6</sup> Deleted "is that he"
- <sup>7</sup> Deleted "That is, but"
- <sup>8</sup> Deleted "that"
- <sup>9</sup> Deleted "by"
- <sup>10</sup> Deleted "if"
- <sup>11</sup> Deleted "with"
- <sup>12</sup> Deleted "is not"
- <sup>13</sup> Deleted "four"
- <sup>14</sup> Changed from "conditioned"
- <sup>15</sup> Deleted "there might or"
- <sup>16</sup> Deleted "that"
- <sup>17</sup> Deleted "there are"
- <sup>18</sup> Deleted "where Socrates"
- <sup>19</sup> Deleted "you"
- <sup>20</sup> Deleted "to chapter four"
- <sup>21</sup> Deleted "and accepting"
- <sup>22</sup> Deleted "spoke"
- <sup>23</sup> Deleted "for"
- <sup>24</sup> Deleted "they have, even they lack"
- <sup>25</sup> Deleted "that"
- <sup>26</sup> Deleted "there would have, would he not"
- <sup>27</sup> Deleted "by"
- <sup>28</sup> Deleted "of"
- <sup>29</sup> Deleted "this"
- <sup>30</sup> Deleted "a rather"
- <sup>31</sup> Deleted "might be"
- <sup>32</sup> Deleted "is it the"
- <sup>33</sup> Deleted "five"



**Session 20: no date**

**[The discussion of Book IV, chapter 2 is missing]**

**Leo Strauss:** [in progress] —trying to show to Euthydemus that he did not know anything worthwhile, although he believed he thought he knew everything. Here, at the beginning of the third chapter, that is the beginning of the non-elenctic teaching of Socrates, but of the teaching as directed toward Euthydemus, the kind of man like Euthydemus. And now let us see. At the beginning he says he did not hurry his companions to become skilled in speech and skilled in action and skilled in devising. I do not know whether Marchant has kept that, because some people don't like that last word, and have deleted it. Three things—yes?

**Student:** Where is that?

**LS:** At the beginning of chapter <sup>1</sup>three.

**Student:** Oh, yes. No, the translation was so different that—

**LS:** I see. So, good. And now these are three things: speaking, devising, doing. And devising—devising, you could also say contriving or deliberating. Now we are familiar with this tripartition. It occurred in Book 1, chapter one, paragraph 19, when, at the end of the refutation of the impiety charge, <sup>2</sup>Socrates is said to believe that the gods know everything: what is said and what is done and what is silently deliberated. This is the same tripartition of which one finds traces also elsewhere in Xenophon. <sup>3</sup>So he, Socrates, did not hurry his companions to become skilled in these three things but he believed that prior to them *sōphrosynē*, moderation, ought to emerge in them. This is also a subject mentioned before in the First Book, chapter two, paragraph 17: that Socrates could be rightly blamed if he taught the kind of things he taught without taking care first that these pupils become reasonable, sensible, moderate. <sup>4</sup>And the connection was Socrates and Alcibiades and Critias: they were not outstanding in moderation, and yet Socrates taught them apparently the political things.

Now let us read. Now we have <sup>5</sup>those who are able to do these three things—speaking, to speak, to act, and to devise—without being moderate. Of those, he thought that they are rather unjust or would become more unjust and more able to do mischief. In the first place, then, he tried to make his companions more moderate regarding the gods. That is the first part of moderation, and from which we may infer that what comes in chapter four: Socrates making his companion just, or justice, is the second part of moderation, moderation comprising these two fundamental virtues. Now read the whole thing again as it is in your translation.

**Reader:** “Skill in speaking and efficiency in affairs, therefore, and ingenuity, were not the qualities that he was eager to foster in his companions. He held that they needed first to acquire prudence. For he believed that those faculties, unless accompanied by prudence, increased in their possessors injustice and power for mischief. In the first place, then, he tried to make his companions prudent towards the gods. Accordingly he discoursed on this topic at various times, as those who were present used to relate. The following conversation between him and Euthydemus I heard myself.” (IV.3.1-2)

**LS:** Ya. So Xenophon speaks here as if this were the only conversation between Socrates and somebody else on piety which he recorded, but you will remember we had already such a conversation on piety between Socrates and someone else. That was in Book 1, chapter four, the conversation with Aristodemus. Xenophon seems to forget his own earlier narrative of Socrates conversing with people about the gods. Xenophon was present at both conversations, according to his claim, and it would be a solecism of the first order to try to question that. We have to take his word for it. And you see also that the conversation is not literal, the report is not literal [but rather about] <sup>6</sup>when he once conversed with a view to Euthydemus in *about* the following manner. It's not literal. So these are two discussions of piety in the book, in the work, but they <sup>7</sup>have a different function. Here that is part of the presentation of Socrates' *teaching*, the first part of Socrates' positive teaching. The other discussion—Book 1, chapter four—shows how Socrates *helped* Aristodemus at a moment of his greatest need, namely, when he ridiculed the people who sacrifice and who made use of divination. Euthydemus does not do such things. He's not a mocker. Yes?

**Reader:**

"Tell me, Euthydemus," he began, "has it ever occurred to you to reflect on the care the gods have taken to furnish man with what he needs?"

"No, indeed it has not," replied Euthydemus.

"Well, no doubt you know that our first and foremost need is light, which is supplied to us by the gods?"

"Of course; since without light our eyes would be as useless as if we were blind."

"And again, we need rest; and therefore the gods grant us the welcome respite of night."

"Yes, for that too we owe them thanks."

"And since the night by reason of her darkness is dim, whereas the sun by his brightness illuminates the hours of the day and all things else, have they not made stars to shine in the night, that mark the watches of night for us, and do we not thereby satisfy many of our needs?"

"That is so."

"Moreover, the moon reveals to us not only the divisions of the night, but of the month too."

"Certainly." (IV.3.3-4)

**LS:** Ya, let us stop here for one moment. Now Euthydemus had not given any thought to the care the gods have of man. What about Aristodemus? What about . . . ? We must always compare these two comparable human beings, and the names seem to indicate their kinship: Euthydemus, Aristodemus. Both belong in a way to the *demos*, but Aristodemus is the best of the *demos*. And now, well, Aristodemus had given thought, if deplorably insufficient, but Euthydemus had not given it any thought whatever. Now the first arguments which we have heard now about sun, moon, and stars have no parallel whatever in the first conversation. What that means we may perhaps find out from the sequel. Now let us go on, paragraph five.

**Reader:**

“Now, seeing that we need food, think how they make the earth to yield it, and provide to that end appropriate seasons which furnish in abundance the diverse things that minister not only to our wants but to our enjoyment.”

“Truly these things too show loving-kindness.”

“Think again—” (IV.3.5-6)

**LS:** Not love; more, the Greek word is *philánthrōpa*, acts of love of human beings. You know the word, our word, philanthropy, comes from that. It has in Greek [a] somewhat different meaning than it now has, philanthropy. It means that men <sup>8</sup>like human beings on the whole, just as cats like cats, and dogs like dogs. That, in other words, the real thing is of course *virtue*, and loving virtue and not loving human beings regardless of their worth. Yes?

**Reader:**

“Think again of their precious gift of water, that aids the earth and the seasons to give birth and increase to all things useful to us and itself helps to nourish our bodies, and mingling with all that sustains us, makes it more digestible, more wholesome, and more palatable: and how, because we need so much of it, they supply it without stint.”

“That too shows design at work.”

“Think again of the blessing of fire, our defence against cold and against darkness, our helpmate in every art and all that man contrives for this service. In fact, to put it shortly, nothing of any account that is useful to the life of man is contrived without the aid of fire.”

“This too is a signal token of—”

**LS:** Philanthropy.

**Reader:** “philanthropy—<sup>i</sup>” (IV.3.6-8)

**LS:** In the sense, well . . . . So here this section ends, and here is spoken of the earth, water, and fire. And fire has not been stolen from the god by some Prometheus but has been given by the gods. Now these are three elements. The fourth element—what about that? What is the fourth element, may I ask?

**Student:** Air.

**LS:** Air. And why should air be missing? In one manuscript, and not a particularly good one, a remark on the air occurs. It was obviously inserted by some reader who felt that the air should be in. Perhaps it should be, but that was not Xenophon’s thought. Yes?

**Student:** Perhaps air precedes the gods. I mean, that’s a thought?

**LS:** Ya, I believe there is a monist . . . consider the air in Xenophon, and as far as I know <sup>9</sup>air never occurs in Xenophon, except in the compound *aerometrein*—measuring the air—which was a comic expression applied to Socrates. Socrates is measuring the air. So it would be Socrates is

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<sup>i</sup> In translation: “loving kindness”

as far away from that that he does not even mention the air. I think here is the meaning of that. Yes. Now let us go on.

**Reader:**

“Think again how the sun, when past the winter solstice, approaches, ripening some things and withering others, whose time is over; and having accomplished this, approaches no nearer, but turns away, careful not to harm us by excess of heat; and when once again in his retreat he reaches the point where it is clear to ourselves, that if he goes further away, we shall be frozen with the cold, back he turns once more and draws near and revolves in that region of the heavens where he can best serve us.”

“Yes, verily, these things do seem to be done for the sake of mankind.” (IV.3.8)

**LS:** Yes, so that “for the sake of mankind” everything has been, what is: sun, moon, and stars, and the elements—they have been made for the use of man. One can call this an anthropocentric teleology. Yet there is no such thing in the conversation with Aristodemos; there the emphasis is on the gods’ love of *animals*, not of human beings in particular. This is an argument directed toward Euthydemus here. Yes?

**Reader:**

“And again, since it is evident that we could not endure the heat or the cold if it came suddenly, the sun’s approach and retreat are so gradual that we arrive at the one or the other extreme imperceptibly.”

“For myself,” exclaimed Euthydemus, “I begin to doubt whether after all the gods are occupied in any other work than the service of man.” (IV.3.9)

**LS:** So in other words, that is the sole occupation of the gods, to serve man, yes? But he has a difficulty?

**Reader:** “The one difficulty I feel is that the lower animals also enjoy these blessings.” (4.III.9)

**LS:** Ya. The other animals, yes. So that is a difficulty, and therefore that is a defect of Socrates’ argument, of the anthropocentric teleology. Now <sup>10</sup>what does Socrates reply to that?

**Reader:**

“Yes,” replied Socrates, “and is it not evident that they too receive life and food for the sake of man? For what creature reaps so many benefits as man from goats and sheep and horses and oxen and asses and the other animals? He owes more to them, in my opinion, than to the fruits of the earth. At the least they are not less valuable to him for food and commerce; in fact a large portion of mankind does not use the products of the earth for food, but lives on the milk and cheese and flesh they get from live stock.” (IV.3.10)

**LS:** Yes. Now let us consider this for one moment. So Socrates has disposed of the difficulty that the other animals are for the sake of men, and they are eminently useful [to]<sup>11</sup> men, as is shown by cheese, and meat, and other things of this kind. But if animals are so much more important to men than plants, why does Socrates in the *Oeconomicus* not treat cattle breeding at all, but only the cultivation of plants? I think we have discussed that at the time, I do not know whether you

will remember it. So in other words, what is true of moon and stars and of the elements is also true of plants and animals, although the plants, it is not emphasized to . . . . Yes?

**Student:** Does Socrates' reply really deal with, handle—can it handle the objection? Does Socrates' reply really handle Euthydemus' objection since he only mentions the useful kind, kinds of animals, not things like tigers or—

**LS:** Ya, well, let us see what follows. Perhaps that's not the end of it. Ya? Good.

**Reader:** “Moreover, all men tame and domesticate the useful kinds of animals, and make them their fellow-workers in war and many other undertakings.”

**LS:** There, you see. So he, Socrates, admits here that all not animals are useful. You know, the domestic animals especially are manifestly useful, but the lions and tigers of which you spoke are not so manifestly useful unless someone thinks that the skins—how do you call them, the—?

**Student:** Pelt? Pelt? Hides?

**LS:** Hides, ya, that is, or something particularly useful. So Socrates is aware of this difficulty. Yes.

**Reader:**

“There too I agree with you, seeing that animals far stronger than man become so entirely subject to him that he puts them to any use he chooses.”

“Think again of the multitude of things beautiful and useful and their infinite variety, and how the gods have endowed man with senses adapted for the perception of every kind, so that there is nothing good that we cannot enjoy; and again, how they have implanted in us the faculty of reasoning, whereby we are able to reason about the objects of our perceptions and to commit them to memory, and so come to know what advantage every kind can yield, and devise many means of enjoying the good and driving away the bad; and think of the power of expression, which enables us to impart to one another all good things by teaching and to take our share of them, to enact laws and to administer states.”

“Truly, Socrates, it does appear that the gods devote much care to man.” (IV.3.10-12)

**LS:** Yes. And he now says only much care because there is a difficulty regarding the non-useful animals. He has—no, previously he had said the gods seem to have no other occupation than to serve man, but now we see, have seen, that this is not quite true. In the conversation with Aristodemus, Socrates had of course also spoken of the special privileges which men enjoy, especially of the erect posture, of hands, and tongue. That does not occur here. And regarding the soul, he had said there the great benefit is knowledge of the gods of the cosmos. That is, again—<sup>12</sup>here the most important thing is legislation, of which he had not spoken to Aristodemus. Yes?

**Reader:**

“Yet again, in so far as we are powerless of ourselves to foresee what is expedient for the future,<sup>ii</sup> the gods lend us their aid, revealing the issues by divination to inquirers, and teaching them how to obtain the best results.”

“With you, Socrates, they seem to deal even more friendly than with other men, if it is true that, even unasked, they warn you by signs what to do and what not to do.” (IV.3.12)

**LS:** Ya. This played a certain role in the conversation with Aristodemos, but there the point was that that Aristodemos did not believe in Socrates’ *daimonion*. What is the situation here?

Euthydemus has heard of it—he does not use the expression *daimonion*, but he has heard that Socrates has a reputation even without being told the future, even without having asked the gods before. Perhaps we can leave this open for the time being, whether Euthydemus believes or does not believe in divination. Let us go on.

**Reader:** ““Yes, and you will realise the truth of what I say if, instead of waiting for the gods to appear to you in bodily presence, you are content to praise and worship them because you see their works.”” (IV.3.13)

**LS:** Yes, now one moment. Socrates thus proves the truth of what? [This] could mean the truth of divination in general and of Socrates’ *daimonion* in particular, or it could mean the truth of his whole theology as presented in the earlier section of this chapter. That is ambiguous, but at any rate, the main point is this: one must not wait until the gods appear in visible shape, but one must contemplate the actions of the gods. And then he explains that.

**Reader:** ““Mark that the gods themselves give the reason for doing so; for when they bestow on us their good gifts, not one of them ever appears before us gift in hand; and especially he who co-ordinates and holds together the universe, wherein all things are fair and good, and presents them ever unimpaired and sound and ageless for our use, and quicker than thought to serve us unerringly, is manifest in his supreme works, and yet is unseen by us in the ordering of them.”” (IV.3.13)

**LS:** Yes, so that here there was one point which some of you may have observed. He [says]<sup>13</sup> here first that the gods give us the good things, in the middle of this paragraph; and then a little bit later, [he says] this whole cosmos in which everything is beautiful and good. Beautiful and good. Beautiful refers to the things which are beautiful to the beholder, [which]<sup>14</sup> are gratifying to behold as such, which shouldn’t have to give us any other utility. Yes?

**Reader:** ““Mark that even the sun, who seems to reveal himself to all, permits not man to behold him closely, but if any attempts to gaze recklessly upon him, blinds their eyes. And the gods’ ministers—””

**LS:** Do you see that? Here, of course, his example is not so apt as the preceding one, because the sun is not altogether invisible. So—only it is dangerous for the eyes to look shamelessly at the sun without reverence, as Socrates had done in the *Clouds*,<sup>15</sup> in his . . . the thing in which he was

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<sup>ii</sup> *Cyropaedia* I. 6.46.

sitting, and what he did was understood by Strepsiades that he looks down on the gods. But from above. Another . . . . Yes? The next point.

**Reader:** ““And the gods’ ministers too you will find to be invisible. That the thunderbolt is hurled from heaven, and that he overwhelms all on whom he falls, is evident, but he is seen neither coming nor striking nor going. And the winds are themselves invisible, yet their deeds are manifest to us, and we perceive their approach. Moreover, the soul of man, which more than all else than is human partakes of the divine, reigns manifestly within us, and yet is itself unseen.”” (IV.3.14)

**LS:** Yes. So examples in the middle were sun, lightning, and winds. The least obvious proof of the invisibility of the gods. But then the last, that is an impressive one. The soul which rules in us is invisible, and why should not god ruling the universe be invisible? This last argument had been used in the conversation with Aristodemus. Yes.

**Reader:**

“For these reasons it behoves us not to despise the things that are unseen, but, realising their power in their manifestations, to honour the godhead.”

“Socrates,” replied Euthydemus, “that I will in no wise be heedless of the godhead I know of a surety. But my heart fails me when I think that no man can ever render due thanks to the gods for their benefits.”

“Nay, be not down-hearted, Euthydemus—” (IV.3.15-16)

**LS:** But Aristodemus was not for one moment down-hearted in any respect. Ya?

**Reader:**

“for you know that to the inquiry, ‘How am I to please the gods?’ the Delphic god replies, ‘Follow the custom of the state’; and everywhere, I suppose, it is the custom that men propitiate the gods with sacrifices according to their power. How then can a man honour the gods more excellently and more devoutly—”

**LS:** Well, I would translate, “more nobly and more piously” to bring out the fact that while the noble and the pious are akin, they are not identical.

**Reader:**

“How then can a man honour the gods more nobly and more piously than by doing as they themselves ordain? Only he must fall no whit short of his power. For when he does that, it is surely plain that he is not then honouring the gods. Therefore it is by coming no whit short of his power in honouring the gods that he is to look with confidence for the greatest blessings. For there are none from whom a man of prudence would hope for greater things than those who can confer the greatest benefits, nor can he show his prudence more clearly than by pleasing them. And how can he please them better than by obeying them strictly?”

Thus by precept and by example alike he strove to increase in his companions Piety and Prudence. (IV.3.16-18)

**LS:** Ya. Yet—well, the word which he translates prudence is *sōphronesterous* again, what I translate by moderate. But, at any rate, here piety and moderation are distinguished, although they're treated as obviously very close to each other. Piety means obeying the gods, and moderation has not itself, in itself, this meaning. Now here there is one point. He refers here to the Delphic oracle that tells man to serve the gods according to the law of the city, and the law is everywhere that one should gratify the gods by sacrifices according to one's power: the rich man large sacrifices, and the poor man rare and infrequent sacrifices. This had been discussed before but then it was not traced to the Delphic oracle but to Hesiod, to Hesiod and who had made a recommendation to this effect. Now Socrates traces it to the Delphic god. How Delphic god comes in is hard to say because what Socrates has proved in his argument here is the existence of what we can call the cosmic gods but not of Apollo, such gods as Apollo. That is a minor difficulty here. Now this is Socrates' teaching of piety as addressed to Euthydemus. Well, we must compare it to the teaching addressed to Aristodemos in order to see whether it is true, what I'm inclined to think, that Euthydemus does not belong to the good natures. That everyone must make up his own mind about. Is there anything you would like to take up at this point?

**Student (probably Mr. Klein):** Doesn't here Xenophon—Socrates, here in the third chapter, identify *sophrosyne* with *eusebeia*?

**LS:** I don't think so because at the beginning, when he says [that] first *sophrosyne* must come in, ya, and before anything else. And then he says—in the first place, he tried to make his companions to be moderate in regard to the gods.

**Student:** But doesn't that mean here pious? Doesn't it mean pious?

**LS:** Ya, it could, but then piety is a subdivision of moderation and not a—they are not identical.

**Student:** I can't help the impression that in this chapter Xenophon tries to present Socrates as using two words for the same thing.

**LS:** Ah, yes, <sup>16</sup>I believe I understand what you mean. But I do not—that some thought of this kind was in his mind, I would have granted. But I do not believe that this is helpful here, and [for] the very simple reason: he says first they should become moderate and then he would try to make them skilled in doing, skilled in speaking, and skilled in devising. Now he begins to speak of these skills in chapter five. What is the function of chapter four? That has nothing to do with any skills of this kind, and therefore it is more natural to say that it's a part of moderation. And it makes sense to say that moderation has these two parts: one with a view to the gods, and the other with a view to men. Horizontal and vertical. Other presentations of the same subject are possible. You can understand piety as a subdivision of justice, as it is done sometime in Plato, sure, but the question is what does he do here.

**Student:** Well, I mean, when one says with relation to gods, then with relation to men, it seems the more obvious focal point for moderation would seem to be one's self.

**LS:** That would be something else, I believe. Xenophon allows for that, and that he will speak of in chapter five, and that is what he calls with a very different term continence, *enkratia*. That is



in a way also preparatory to skills, but in a very different way from moderation. You know, self-control regarding the pleasures of the body is also a preparation, but a preparation of a different kind than piety and justice. These questions are always there, in Plato's *Protagoras*, for example, you know: the difference between continence and justice and piety, the different cases. In the one case, the virtue of continence, the virtue is effective even if you are not seen by gods and men. In the case of piety and justice, the virtue is not effective if you are not seen by gods and men. I mean, that is clear: if you overeat, then this has its effect regardless of whether anyone sees it or not; but in the case if you steal or even murder, or blaspheme, or commit perjury, this is harmful to you only if seen by gods and men. Therefore Xenophon suggests a modification of a possible formula for penal law: he who does this will be punished well, with a parenthesis, "if he is caught." I mean, it cannot be stated as that in general, as a prediction regarding the future.

**Student:** This of course completely contrary to the understanding of justice, say, in the *Gorgias*, where there . . . the harm to a man is what he does to his soul.

**LS:** Ya, ya! Xenophon is familiar with that. But justice has various *levels*, has various levels. There is a justice which does not have—for example, justice as obedience to the law if the law itself is unjust; and according to a common understanding which Xenophon always presupposes, justice is law-abidingness, without any questions asked about the justice of the law. Then it is hard to see why such an injustice should harm the soul. Say, take the simple case of an extremely foolish, an extremely tyrannical order. If you do not obey it, will you—I mean, you can suffer harm in your *body* if you are caught, but how could you suffer harm in your soul? And in the addition, the next chapter will deal exactly with this question: Is justice not identical with law-abidingness? And Socrates' answer there is: They are identical. Yes, consider that. That comes now only later. Yes?

**Student:** Why is it that there're different cities where different gods are worshipped, and to be pious is to, when in each city, worship the gods that are worshiped in that city—

**LS:** Ya.

**Student:** Why is it that with respect to something like poetry—

**LS:** Pardon?

**Student:** With respect to something like poetry, Xenophon is very interested in the content, maybe in the content of Aristophanes' poetry, and the form is almost an adjunct to the content. But with respect to piety, the content is almost irrelevant from one city to another—it makes no difference as long as one is pious and observes the form of obedience to the Gods. It seems that there's a certain disparity.

**LS:** Well, he doesn't take up the question what you should do if you come as a citizen of city A to city B. You should also worship your own gods at home.

**Student:** But how about if there's a conflict. If it was two different parts of Greece who interpreted—

**LS:** No, but this wasn't—then you would have to take examples from the Bible, when a biblical Jew comes, say, to Syria and <sup>17</sup>should he comply with the rights of the Syrians?

**Student:** That's what I want to know.

**LS:** That is a good, ya, but it doesn't come up here.

**Student:** Well, what if—

**LS:** But no, I believe one <sup>18</sup>cannot decide it on the basis of Xenophon or Plato himself, but one has to see how their successors decided this kind of question—you know, who were confronted with it.

**Student:** The successors to Xenophon heard of it—

**LS:** Yes, the later philosophers who were only philosophers.

**Student:** Well, how would we decide such a matter if we were just thinking about it now? I mean, what kind of thinking—

**LS:** Ya, because we are not philosophers and we would like to learn something from the philosophers.

**Student:** But who should we look to—?

**LS:** Pardon? Well, of course there were great men who wrote about these subjects in later times, but I say those who were philosophers and only philosophers. And they said, as a rule: What makes the least trouble in the state.

**Student:** Do you think that's right?

**LS:** Pardon?

**Student:** Do you think that's right?

**LS:** It's a possible solution.

**Student:** How could we, how could you convince anyone that you were committed to a proper worship even in their own city if they saw that you were incapable of commitment to what you originally . . .

**LS:** Ya, but the question here: people were not convinced by the philosophers in question, I believe you [in] that, but they were convinced by the bad consequences of persecution. And so gradually what is called toleration came in.

**Student:** Toleration.

**LS:** And then this whole difficulty disappeared, and perhaps also the foundation of the difficulties disappeared. And so that is a long question.

**Student:** But who should, who would be good to read?

**LS:** Bodin, for example.

**Student:** Bodin?

**LS:** Ya, <sup>19</sup>he was a French justice, among other things, who belonged to a group called *Les Politiques*, the political men, politicians who <sup>20</sup>were neither Catholics nor Protestants, which was at that time the issue in France. But formally he was a Catholic, of course, but he was as much against Rome as he was against Geneva. And then they gradually—they succeeded in strange ways, very strange ways. For example, in one place, a small country, it proved to be extremely profitable to be tolerant. That was Holland.

**Student:** There's certain people, even today, who for example go to church on Sunday not because they believe what's being said in the church or what the church is trying to say, but because they believe it's good for the people to see a great man go to church.

**LS:** Ya.

**Student:** It's good for the people. Somehow it's going to help their moral fiber, that they can see that even the great men go to church.

**LS:** Ya, well, I hope the great men will never support such a view.

**Student:** You hope not?

**LS:** No.

**Student:** Okay, good.

**LS:** Then they wouldn't be great men, basically.

**Student:** I wonder if, I wonder about the relationship between piety and moderation. What is—what subdivision. It looks like piety is originally a variation, but this is maybe, in Xenophon's thinking, maybe it is different. But I am not clear.

**LS:** Ya, well, the translations <sup>21</sup>of these key terms are so hard to make. The term which I translate as moderation, *sōphrosynē*, is the opposite of *hubris*. Now <sup>22</sup>that *hubris* has something to do with impiety is obvious, but there is also an *hubris* toward human beings: insolent pride, as it's ordinarily translated. If you think of that, I believe this difficulty will appear. And according

to Xenophon's presentation, one could say the most obvious support of justice will be piety, if that is what you mean.

**Student (probably Mr. Klein):** Excuse me, I must add something to that. The emphasis of this chapter is that the gods are invisible, these gods.

**LS:** Ya.

**Student:** Yeah. Everything important is invisible.

**LS:** Ya.

**Student:** And the . . . who look at the sun. Now doesn't that mean that when we are not moderate, when we are not, when we don't have *sophrosyne* in general, it means that we forget that which is invisible. We think that we can have whatever we want by facing things, and that moderation consists, precisely, not to forget that there is something invisible. In that sense, the extreme view, fairly, I still think in this chapter—I don't know what else there is—it can, the identification of these things. To be moderate means not to forget that the most important things are invisible.

**LS:** Ya. But that is—ya, you can say that, but you have to add this on the basis of what *Xenophon* presents as [a] difficulty in these matters: that these invisible beings watch what you do and treat you by reward or punishment according to what you did. So that, I mean, the existence of these invisible beings is not sufficient. They must also exercise what was traditionally called particular providence, in the form of rewarding the just and punishing the unjust.

**Student:** But that is, but this is not mentioned in the chapter.

**LS:** No, but will we believe it is because Euthydemus is too high for this other consideration? The argument regarding the invisible beings is this. The most simple argument against the gods would be: I never see them, and what is, is visible. And only to reply to this argument does Socrates say: This is not true. There can be beings which are invisible, ya, which makes perfect sense.

**Student:** And to be aware of that means to be a) moderate and b) pious.

**LS:** Not necessarily, if these invisible beings are wholly unconcerned with what human beings do. Why should it?

**Student:** But it is—the chapter says, the chapter itself implies that they do it [to]<sup>23</sup> benefit human beings, the sun, the water, the earth—

**LS:** Ya, that is true.

**Student:** That's what they do.

**LS:** Ya, but still there's a great difference between a general providence and particular providence.

**Student:** Yes.

**LS:** The latter being a providence concerned with man's justice or injustice. That doesn't follow. I believe the fellows in Melos could have granted more or less what is said here about the gods—their invisibility and so on—and yet they would have said precisely the deeds of the gods which we observe show that the strongest can take what he wants, and there is no justice in the world.

**Student:** . . . I will make it very simple. Can you say that this is pious . . . if it is not pious? If moderation is something different from piety, then I don't know. But their relationship is something different. My impression is that ,. . .

**Student:** Also they do what's good.

**Student:** Ya, certainly. Obviously. Piety, it is strange, strikes me that there are no [mentions] of [courses] . . . which you must not do. . . .

**LS:** No, of course not.

**Student:** Not at all.

**LS:** Of course not.

**Student:** . . . .

**LS:** Ya, sure. Ya. Should you. But one must not impose too great a burden on Euthydemus.

**Student:** This point, or?

**LS:** Pardon?

**Student:** I think that this point is very important, because what would happen if a man came who believed in certain invisible things—maybe he believed in the gods and maybe he believed in right and wrong, invisible things, and he came to a city in which all the people were very tolerant but they did not believe in those invisible things, and he had piety towards those things—but in the city he is impious and immoderate, and he's a corrupter of the youth, to be put to death. So it seems to me that true—

**LS:** That has happened, hasn't it, more than once?

**Student:** True piety to things that are invisible may involve, <sup>24</sup>among a tolerant society, may involve the drinking of hemlock, eventually.

**LS:** Ya. I believe Xenophon in his speech to them . . . has provided for this possibility insofar as he understood moderation as consisting of two parts: piety and justice. And this is then a further question whether perhaps one can have a perfectly just city without piety. That is the question which deserves discussion. It is necessary to discuss it. That was one of the greatest inventions of modern times, when someone stood up and said such a city is possible.

**Student:** But people, many people today don't believe in these things, right and wrong, these invisible things—

**LS:** No—

**Student:** They are very tolerant of each other, and people who do believe in those things are immoderate if they speak about those things. They are—

**LS:** Not necessarily. There are also sincerely pious people who are tolerant. Think of the Reverend Smith here. You must not—to say nothing of Mr. Kaplan, so that is not so simply true. But let us now turn to chapter—

**Student:** Well, ya, I'm sorry, the page where, another question. I'm wondering why, or if you—

[break in tape]

**LS:** —takes up the question of evil . . . very soon. No? In the second chap—

[break in tape]

**Student:** Yeah, I—well, <sup>25</sup>but well, maybe, I mean, what your answer to Mrs. Kaplan, at one point, when you should said one should not try to overburden Euthydemus, I mean, could one say that the pious introductions must always emphasize . . . should emphasize . . .

**LS:** No, not pious things, but generally speaking one can understand the negative only in the light of the positive. So. Now let us turn to the next chapter, and where Xenophon speaks, begins rather abruptly and says about the just too he did not conceal his opinion. I think that only confirms what I said, that the just belongs to the same virtue called moderation and is a supplement to piety. Now, will you please read the first part?

**Reader:** “Again, concerning Justice he did not hide his opinion, but proclaimed it by his actions. All his private conduct was lawful and helpful: to the public authority he rendered such scrupulous obedience in all that the laws required, both in civil life and in military service, that he was a pattern of good discipline to all.” (IV.4.1)

**LS:** Yes, let us stop here for one moment. You see, his military activity is part of his justice, and therefore Xenophon doesn't mention manliness or courage among Socrates' virtues. You see also he used privately every one, all, in a lawful as well as useful [manner]. Lawful is not necessarily identical with useful. Xenophon's beautiful example of the big boy and the small coat and the small boy with a big coat, and where Xenophon, or his Cyrus rather, took away the

big coat from the small boy and changed the coats, and was punished by his teacher (in Persia they had schools of justice) because he was not supposed to adjudicate on the basis of the useful but on the basis of the lawful. But this shows that there is a certain difficulty regarding that. Now this is the only chapter in the whole work in which Xenophon treats Socrates' justice in *deed*. The only chapter. There are quite a few chapters dealing with Socrates' piety in deed and with his continence in deed but not with his justice. At any rate, this chapter is the central chapter, [the] central conversation in Book Four. Now let us go on. Xenophon will now give three examples of Socrates' justice as shown in civil life. He will not speak of his justice in war. Yes?

**Reader:**

When chairman in the Assemblies he would not permit the people to record an illegal vote, but, upholding the laws, resisted a popular impulse that might even have overborne any but himself. And when the Thirty laid a command on him that was illegal, he refused to obey. Thus he disregarded their repeated injunction not to talk with young men; and when they commanded him and certain other citizens to arrest a man on a capital charge, he alone refused, because the command laid on him was illegal. Again, when he was tried on the charge brought by Meletus, whereas it is the custom of defendants to curry favour with the jury and to indulge in flattery and illegal appeals, and many by such means have been known to gain a verdict of acquittal, he rejected utterly the familiar chicanery of the courts; and though he might easily have gained a favourable verdict by even a moderate indulgence in such stratagems, he chose to die through his loyalty to the laws rather than to live through violating them. (IV.4.2-4)

**LS:** Ya, well, if you would read in Greek, one would see how the term *nomos*, law, occurs with unnecessary frequency. This is the word law. We <sup>26</sup>have heard first justice, but now we hear Socrates always acted lawfully. There are three examples of justice, Socrates' justice. Two have already been discussed before: the one regarding the generals in command at the Arginusae, and that was discussed in the first chapter of the very First Book, and there it was given to prove that Socrates was *pious* because he did not perjure himself by acting against the oath of an official. And the second example, regarding Socrates under the Thirty, that was discussed in the second chapter of the First Book, and <sup>27</sup>here <sup>28</sup>there is a flat contradiction because there Socrates said: You, Critias and Charicles, you are the legislators and I am of course perfectly willing to obey the laws. But then Xenophon had not mentioned the story of this Leon of Salamis, who is not mentioned by name here but who is mentioned in Plato's *Apology*, whom Socrates refused to arrest. But there, in the other respect, regarding the conversing that is forbidden, <sup>29</sup>the prohibition against conversing with the young, that is first declared to be legal in the second chapter of the First Book. It is now declared to be illegal. And as for the last example, which has not been discussed before, Socrates' conduct at the trial, that is discussed in the very last chapter of the *Memorabilia*; and there this conduct of Socrates is traced to his *daimonion*: the god gave him a sign not to do these things. It is not traced to Socrates' justice in particular. So now this is an account of Socrates' just deeds, of which three most outstanding ones are mentioned. And now let us come to the speech.

**Reader:** "Such views frequently found expression in his conversations with different persons; I recollect the substance of one that he had with Hippias of Elis concerning Justice." (IV.5.5)

**LS:** Ya, the “substance”<sup>30</sup> means it is not literal, ya? [It] is not a literal report. Now this conversation with Hippias which comes now, the famous sophist from Elis, that is the central conversation here in this section, chapters two to six, just as the conversation with the sophist Antiphon was the central conversation in Book 1, chapter four, to Book 2, chapter one. These are the only two conversations with sophists occurring in the book, but Hippias is not called a sophist. One could wonder why [there is] not a conversation<sup>31</sup> on justice with Euthydemus. He would be the natural companion, the *synon*, for this conversation. But one can say Hippias was famous or notorious as a despiser of the laws, and therefore a defense of the laws against Hippias would be much more impressive than a defense of the laws against Euthydemus, if it ever would have occurred to Euthydemus to have a doubt about the laws. In the case of piety, Socrates did have a conversation with a despiser of piety. That was precisely with Aristodemos in the First Book, but Aristodemos was not a sophist. The conversation with Hippias could very well have been beneficial to Euthydemus, because nothing excludes the possibility that Euthydemus was present at that conversation. And Euthydemus was prepared for the conversation by the conversation in chapter two, where justice was discussed and where it had not been made clear what justice is. So he must have had a natural desire to find out from Socrates what justice is. Now in this preceding discussion it was not said but suggested that justice is the same as helping friends and harming enemies, public enemies. But the question is whether that is sufficient. For example, it would not follow from this notion that you have to pay greater honor to your parents than to, than to other people. That would follow, however, rather naturally from the view that the just is the legal, which Socrates will present in this dialogue. Euthydemus did not propose [a definition of justice]. One could say: What would have happened in the second chapter if Euthydemus had said the just is the legal, then Socrates could not have proceeded with his elenctic procedure? There are various explanations possible. One, perhaps, that Euthydemus was too pseudo-sophisticated to suggest it; and the other is that Xenophon as the author of the book must be given a certain privilege in selecting what kind of things will happen in a given chapter. Yes. Now let us read the rest of paragraph five.

**Reader:** “Hippias, who had not been in Athens for a considerable time, found Socrates talking: he was saying that if you want to have a man taught cobbling or building or smithing or riding, you know where to send him to learn the craft: some indeed declare that if you want to train up a horse or an ox in this way he should go, teachers abound. And yet, strangely enough, if you want to learn Justice yourself, or to have your son or servant taught it, you know not where to go for a teacher.” (IV.5.4)

**LS:** Ya. Well, this is a strange introduction to a proof that the just is the same as the legal, because there are everywhere plenty of teachers of the law, of the legal. And of course teaching dogs and horses—or what does he say?—horses and oxen to become just, I would think that is clear. I mean, every training of horses makes them just. They don’t throw you off or kick you and other things which unjust horses might do. The same would apply to oxen. Now, how does he go on?

**Reader:**

When Hippias heard this, “How now?” he cried in a tone of raillery, “still the same old sentiments, Socrates, that I heard from you so long ago?”



“Yes, Hippias,” he replied, “always the same, and—what is more astonishing—on the same topics too! You are so learned that I daresay you never say the same thing on the same subjects.” (IV.6.6)

**LS:** So Socrates is not learned in this sense, and he speaks always about the same things, not about all things, and therefore this kind of variety is absent from his speeches. Yes.

**Reader:**

“I certainly try to say something fresh every time.”

“Do you mean, about what you know? For example, in answer to the question, ‘How many letters are there in “Socrates” and how do you spell it?’ do you try to say something different now from what you said before? Or take figures: suppose you are asked if twice five are ten, don’t you give the same answer now as you gave before?”

“About letters and figures, Socrates, I always say the same thing, just like you. As for Justice, I feel confident that I can now say that which neither you nor anyone else can contradict.” (IV.4.6-7)

**LS:** The question of Socrates’ name and how is spelled—I should have thought [of] it when we spoke of self-knowledge and of Euthydemus’ certainty that he possesses self-knowledge, because that would be the most obvious way of self-knowledge: to know one’s name. You see, when we ask in ordinary, everyday [conversation]: Do you know that man? And what is meant by it: Do you know his name? And the same would apply to one’s self. But that is only in passing, yes. Yes? So, but Hippias has now a new and novel speech about the just—

[end of tape]

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<sup>1</sup> Deleted “of Book, of chapter”

<sup>2</sup> Deleted “where”

<sup>3</sup> Deleted “Now, and then”

<sup>4</sup> Deleted “because”

<sup>5</sup> Deleted “ya, yes”

<sup>6</sup> Deleted “what he once, when he”

<sup>7</sup> Deleted “are”

<sup>8</sup> Deleted “have”

<sup>9</sup> Deleted “it occurred”

<sup>10</sup> Deleted “what’s”

<sup>11</sup> Deleted “of”

<sup>12</sup> Deleted “in”

<sup>13</sup> Deleted “speaks”

<sup>14</sup> Deleted “who”

<sup>15</sup> Deleted “when he”

<sup>16</sup> Deleted “that I”

<sup>17</sup> Deleted “should he there”

<sup>18</sup> Deleted “one can only”

<sup>19</sup> Deleted “He belonged to a French”

<sup>20</sup> Deleted “he”

<sup>21</sup> Deleted “are so”

<sup>22</sup> Deleted “what”

<sup>23</sup> Deleted “for”

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<sup>24</sup> Deleted “being”

<sup>25</sup> Deleted “that and, yeah”

<sup>26</sup> Deleted “had”

<sup>27</sup> Deleted “there”

<sup>28</sup> Deleted “it is”

<sup>29</sup> Deleted “the prohibition against forbidding, I’m sorry”

<sup>30</sup> Deleted “of that”

<sup>31</sup> Deleted “with”

## Session 21: no date

**Leo Strauss:** [in progress] —even meaning here what is prescribed by the law of the city, so-called positive law. And Hippias originally did not believe that, but Socrates floored him by this consideration. <sup>1</sup>Hippias said: How can one regard laws as something respectable when they are constantly changed by the cities? And Socrates says thereupon: But that would mean also that the cities go from war to peace, or maybe from peace to war, and that you disapprove also of this kind of thing, this kind of change. Do you wish to destroy the morale of the *polis*, of the people engaged in war? Now Hippias <sup>2</sup>is floored by that argument, and this is something jocular but, as always in Socrates, it is serious at the same time. And the same thought I believe is this: the difficulty regarding the positive law is that the positive law always depends on the legislator, and the legislator may be one, a few, and many, and that he may be wise or unwise.

Now, why should laws given by unwise people—perhaps even vicious people—why should they be binding? This is a great difficulty, and that is in a way underlying the present-day civil disobedience difficulty, and that is always a potential problem. Now what Socrates does for his argument against Hippias is this: that he tacitly says: Do not think of the variety of regimes, think of the unity and perpetuity of the *polis*. And there <sup>3</sup>the whole difficulty seems to disappear, because everyone will be loyal to his country, as you would say, <sup>4</sup>however disloyal he may be to the present administration. But the trouble is, of course, that things are not so simple. I believe someone who would claim today that he is loyal to America, in the way that he wants to introduce communism in this country and subvert the constitution, would not be regarded as loyal, as a loyal citizen, by the rest of the community. So loyalty means never merely loyalty to the country but to the country politically organized, to the regime. And this is underlined, these difficulties. The clearest theoretical statement of this view <sup>5</sup>you find in Aristotle when he says that the good citizen is relative to the regime. So a man who would be a good citizen under democracy would, by definition, be a bad citizen under oligarchy because he could not—this full dedication, which is loyalty, which he has to a democracy, he could not have to oligarchy, to say nothing of communism, fascism, and so on. There is only this point also in Aristotle, but not in the *Politics*, in another work of his: according to a more popular [view], and you can say to a view which does not present the problem so obviously, a good citizen is a man who works for the city, for the country, regardless of the change of regime. So, say, think of a good German civil servant who was a very good civil servant under the Weimar Republic, then under Hitler, then under Adenauer: in a way, he is a good citizen. And that <sup>6</sup>is still intelligible, <sup>7</sup>these two notions of the good citizen. That is in a way a summary of the whole political problem. Good. So at any rate, Socrates has succeeded in proving that the just is the legal, and at this point, the conversation takes a new turn in paragraph 19.

### Reader:

“Do you know what is meant by ‘unwritten laws,’ Hippias?”

“Yes, those that are uniformly observed in every country.”

“Could you say that men made them?”

“No, how could that be, seeing that they cannot all meet together and do not speak the same language?”

“Then by whom have these laws been made, do you suppose?”

“I think that the gods made these laws for men.” (IV.4.19)

**LS:** Yes, now one moment. So, the unwritten laws, which are, which obtain everywhere, are laws, but not human laws, but divine laws. And I think the difficulty is implied, but only implied, that there might be a conflict between the written laws and the unwritten laws. And if that is so, the identification of the just and the legal would no longer be tenable. Think only of the *Antigone*, that's the simplest and best-known example. She also, she refers to the unwritten laws<sup>8</sup> which are the divine laws. So Hippias recognizes this—there are such divine laws and then he illustrates it.

**Reader:** “For among all men the first law is to fear the gods.”

**LS:** So that is one of these unwritten laws. Yes.

**Reader:**

“Is not the duty of honouring parents another universal law?”

“Yes, that is another.”

**LS:** Yes.

**Reader:**

“And that parents shall not have sexual intercourse with their children nor children with their parents?”<sup>i</sup>

“No, I don't think that is a law of god.”

**LS:** So, now let us see. In other words, the prohibition against incest, that's a different story according to Hippias. Yes?

**Reader:**

“Why so?”

“Because I notice that some transgress it.” (IV.4.20)

**LS:** Yes. Therefore, since it is transgressed, it cannot be divine law. We have to apply this retroactively to the two first examples. In Hippias' opinion, no one transgresses the law to worship the gods or to honor their parents. Now, whether he was, how, as I would say today, very *naïve* or very clever, that we cannot decide here and so we don't know what he means. But we only have to make clear the implication. But in the case of incest, he is sure that it is not a divine law. And now Socrates comes in.

**Reader:**

“Yes, and they do many other things contrary to the laws. But surely the transgressors of the laws ordained by the gods pay a penalty that a man can in no wise escape, as some, when they transgress the laws ordained by man, escape punishment, either by concealment or by violence.” (IV.4.21)

**LS:** Violence meaning by becoming the masters of the law by assuming political power. Yes?

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<sup>i</sup> *Cyropaedia* V. 1.10.

**Reader:**

“And pray what sort of penalty is it, Socrates, that may not be avoided by parents and children who have intercourse with one another?”

“The greatest, of course. For what greater penalty can men incur when they beget children than begetting them badly?”

“How do they beget children badly then, if, as may well happen, the fathers are good men and the mothers good women?”

“Surely because it is not enough that the two parents should be good. They must also be in full bodily vigour: unless you suppose that those who are in full vigour are no more efficient as parents than those who have not yet reached to that condition or have passed it.”

“Of course that is unlikely.”

“Which are the better then?”

“Those who are in full vigour, clearly.”

“Consequently those who are not in full vigour are not competent to become parents?”

“It is improbable, of course.”

“In that case then, they ought not to have children?”

“Certainly not.”

“Therefore those who produce children in such circumstances produce them wrongly?”

“I think so.”

“Who then will be bad fathers and mothers, if not they?”

“I agree with you there too.” (IV.4.22-23)

**LS:** So Socrates has proven that the prohibition against incest is an unwritten law—it is transgressed, but the people who transgress it are punished for the transgression. Not by any special arrangements, special punishment, but by the natural course of events. And that is, of course, the most effective way of quote “punishing people.” But there are certain indications which we must also consider. Yes?

**Student:** The whole thing is put on nature—

**LS:** Ya, but he doesn’t say anything about nature here.

**Student:** Yeah, but—

**LS:** Ya, sure, you—ya, in fact, you can say of course, <sup>9</sup>the unwritten law, you can say, is a natural law. But Socrates doesn’t say that, he says the divine law.

**Student:** Yeah, well, what I meant is, is that he doesn’t mention, uh, in order to execute, he doesn’t mention when talking about the execution of the punishment any intervention by god, it just happens by itself.

**LS:** Ya, ya. Let us say automatically to avoid the word naturally. Ya. But there is one point to consider: which kind of incest is forbidden by the unwritten law?

**Student:** Parents and children but not among siblings.

**LS:** Yes. Yes, and that has of course its parallel in a more famous discussion of justice, and that is the *Republic*. But there is something else which one has to consider here. What Socrates says amounts to this: a parent having intercourse with a child is not worse than an old husband marrying a very young wife; and whereas the first is generally regarded as something terrible, the later is regarded as perhaps imprudent but surely not wicked. And so the whole, shall I say the whole, the whole life and vigor of the prohibition against incest goes out of it.

**Student:** Or becomes renewed.

**LS:** Pardon?

**Student:** Or it becomes much more forceful, because then the prohibition against incest is not merely an ancestral custom that's been handed down for some unknown reason. But if one could believe that there is something wrong with an old man marrying a young girl because if they have children they won't both be able to bring up the child—

**LS:** Ya, but still, but the difference between *that* and incest disappears.

**Student:** Yeah, but if there's a reason against that, then the reason against incest becomes much stronger.

**LS:** No, I would put it *this* way: incest as incest ceases to be something bad. But an old husband and a young wife, or vice-versa, that is bad. Which has no longer anything . . . all the taboos, as one says, the sacredness, disappears in this way.

**Student:** It makes a change from being an unreasoned taboo to being a reasoned—

**LS:** Ya, all right, you swallow a lot by saying an unreasoned taboo; they are sacred prohibitions.

**Student:** Well, from a sacred prohibition it becomes a reasonable . . .

**LS:** Ya, but the question is: Does not something—is not something being lost that way, something very great?

**Student:** It's not clear that it would be. I don't see it. I see something would be lost, but I don't see that it would become less strong.

**LS:** Ya, well. Ya, at any rate, this has had a long after-history. And by the way, in—where is that?—in Aristophanes' *Assembly of the Women*, this subject comes up in the following manner. There <sup>10</sup>the family is abolished. All are brothers and sisters, or if they belong to different generations, then they are fathers and children. But now there is this special law, laid down by the legislator there for very good private reasons, that no man can enjoy a woman, or vice-versa, before he has “quote enjoyed” a very old member of the opposite sex. Now, since the old people are by definition the parents and the young people by definition the children, that means to make

incest between parents and children obligatory. That goes much beyond anything Plato ever proposed in his re-writing of the marriage laws. Yes?

**Student:** But excuse me. Just what, because of what you said, this punishment for incest cannot be taken seriously.

**LS:** In one way, yes, if that is empirically correct, that if one of the partners is very old the offspring will be very poor; and I believe that is a popular belief, I know.

**Student:** Yes.

**LS:** But whether it is correct, I do not know.

**Student:** No, apart from being correct.

**LS:** Ya.

**Student:** Since this can happen—this difference in age—can happen without incest, it may have the same consequence. Then this first consequence, which is called punishment here, cannot be really taken literally.

**LS:** Ya, of course not, that is what I was trying to say.

**Student:** Yes.

**LS:** Yes, sure. I mean, if this is “punished” only in quotation marks.

**Student:** Yeah, that’s right.

**LS:** Yes. But we are not yet through.

**Reader:**

“Who then will be bad fathers and mothers, if not they?”

“I agree with you there too.”

“Again, is not the duty of requiting benefits universally recognised by law?”

“Yes, but this law too is broken.” (IV.4.23-24)

**LS:** So, since it is universally recognized, it is a divine law. That is implied here, of course. Ya.

**Reader:**

“Then does not a man pay forfeit for the breach of that law too, in the gradual loss of good friends and the necessity of hunting those who hate him? Or is it not true that, whereas those who benefit an acquaintance are good friends to him, he is hated by them for his ingratitude, if he makes no return, and then, because it is most profitable to enjoy the acquaintance of such men, he hunts them most assiduously?” (IV.4.24)

**LS:** Yes, so in other words, ingratitude is something which also is automatically punished. One can only—ya, all right. Let us—this is here surely the best case hitherto. Yes?

**Student:** Does that also apply to the second law then? Is that the “quote rational account” for the second law?

**LS:** Honoring the parents?

**Student:** Yeah.

**LS:** Ya. No—well, Socrates had not said anything about that.

**Student:** Wouldn't the question—it becomes a question whether, if Hippias had objected to any of those first two, whether, what kind of account would be given for them.

**LS:** Now Hippias brought them up, the two examples.

**Student:** No, I know that, but I mean, if it had been the other way around, they—

**LS:** You know when Socrates speaks to his son Lamprocles in a certain situation, there he spoke very highly of the duty of gratitude to the parents. Ya?

**Student:** But he didn't—if I'm not mistaken, he didn't make it a question of justice, did he?

**LS:** Oh yes. The point is, what he said: ingratitude is the clearest case of injustice. That is the way in which he argues with Lamprocles. Yes. So we do not know what Socrates, whether Socrates thought that people who do not honor the gods will be automatically punished. We do not know that, because <sup>11</sup>the first two laws are divine laws in *Hippias*' sense but not necessarily in Socrates' sense. That is a subject for further reflection. Yes?

**Reader:**

“By Zeus<sup>ii</sup>, Socrates, all this does suggest the work of the gods. For laws that involve in themselves punishment meet for those who break them, must, I think, be framed by a better legislator than man.”

“Then, Hippias, do you think that the gods ordain what is just or what is otherwise?”

“By Zeus<sup>iii</sup>, not what is otherwise — of course not; for if a god ordains not that which is just, surely no other legislator can do so.”

“Consequently, Hippias, the gods too accept the identification of just and lawful.” (IV.4.24-25)

**LS:** But there is something queer here in this final conclusion. Here it is presupposed that we want to have laws which are just, and that implies a distinction between the legal and the just. The gods legislate only just things. Humans frequently legislate unjust things. This fact proves, although that is of course not brought up, this fact proves that the just is different from the legal, and this is after all what common sense tells us. If the just were identical with the legal the term

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<sup>ii</sup> In translation: “Assuredly”

<sup>iii</sup> “By Zeus” is not in the translation but added by the reader.



unjust law would be a meaningless expression, and we all can at least imagine laws which would be unjust, unreasonable. For example, if all men whose names begin with A and C have to pay five times the taxes everyone else—it's possible; a legislator in his, a crazy despot might do such a thing, but it would be a law in his state. But <sup>12</sup>that's a crazy law, an unjust law.

So nevertheless, although it is very questionable that the just can be identified with the lawful or the legal, it must make sense to tell people the just is the lawful. Socrates does. Otherwise he would not do it. Otherwise he would be a very bad man, if you would tell something which is absolutely bad, absolutely wrong.

**Student:** Is it possible to link the just with the laws that would be the expression of the highest natural, natural aspects, natural—?

**LS:** All right, but that wouldn't apply to all laws, obviously.

**Student:** No.

**LS:** Oh ya. But then you have granted everything—ya. No, no, but the point is I believe there must be some reason. Mr. Berns?

**Mr. Berns:** I mean, in a certain way, just taken in its very general, crude outlines, this argument <sup>13</sup>has the same kind of structure that Thomas Aquinas' has: that saying that the legal and the just are identified, but only on the divine or natural level.

**LS:** Ya, but <sup>14</sup>Thomas never hesitates to speak of unjust laws.

**Mr. Berns:** Yeah, and he can do that only <sup>15</sup>because he has a higher law, in terms of which—

**LS:** Ya, sure. Well, the natural law alone would be sufficient for that. One doesn't even have to bring in the divine law in his sense or the eternal law.

**Mr. Berns:** Well, maybe the eternal law, because the natural law is part of the eternal law.

**LS:** No, but it is perfectly sufficient <sup>16</sup>to recognize the natural law, to recognize an extra-legal, a standard beyond the positive law. That's it. And the great miracle which happened was that in the nineteenth century the so-called legal positivists won, and not only as a doctrine of sophists or such people, but as the official doctrine all over continental Europe, at least, and also in England . . . . The just is the legal. And if one would try to find out how this happened, I believe one would have to study Rousseau's *Social Contract*, which laid the foundation of it. And a kind of diluted Rousseau was underlying the nineteenth century and to some extent even what is thought today. <sup>17</sup>The motive was this: the distinction between the natural law and the positive law is obviously a reasonable distinction, but what shall the individual subject to the positive law do in case of conflict between the positive law to which he's subject and the natural law? Is he free to disobey it? And then of course a lot of hedging and hemming and hawing begins. You see this, for example, in Thomas, but also elsewhere. And why? Because that is a very grave act, to disobey any law, however foolish. But in certain situations it is inevitable, and especially on the part of certain people who can be trusted owing to their whole conduct that they will not lightly

disregard a law. This is a defensible view. But these are notions which do not have a very precise legal meaning. Men of very good judgment, very responsible people in extreme cases—who's going to define that? People longed for a solution in which there were no if's and but's whatever, and the first philosopher who did this was Hobbes. Every law is to be obeyed. The only command of the natural law which is practically important is to obey [is] that you have to obey the government. All other natural laws are uninteresting compared with that. And that of course is not very good, and Hobbes got his bad reputation precisely because of his doctrine.

And then Locke came and Locke allowed for a revolution, as you know, in very critical situations, also making quite a few cautions, <sup>18</sup>more or less as you know them from the preamble of the *Declaration of Independence*: not for slight and transient causes, and very clear proof that this government is, and the laws which it makes have a tendency to be, ever more opposed to the common good, and so on and so on. And so in Locke <sup>19</sup>you can make a revolution, legitimately a revolution. And Rousseau tried exactly this: to find an order, a legal-political order which is intrinsically just, so that there is never any reason for rebelling against that. And that is the *Social Contract*. And if you apply this to the post-revolutionary state, post- the French Revolution, after the French Revolution—and that was of course the assumption in the nineteenth century. Here, against this modern state which is fundamentally a *Rechtstaat*, as the Germans say, and a state in which law rules, no man has a reason for disobeying or rebelling. But as you know, the problem was there in the nineteenth century and it is there today.

**Mr. Berns:** Yeah, people have made that claim that our own system, perhaps better than any other system, incorporates within its normal electoral procedures, or makes or allows for the working out of any revolutionary claim in a non-revolutionary way. I was thinking that our system incorporates or institutionalizes the right to rebellion through the electoral system.

**LS:** Ya, but then the question comes up in this case. Let us assume that a fascist kind of revolution is in the offing. Is this praise of the Constitution of the United States, that it makes possible the fascist to win power? I think what people think of when they use this argument is this: this country is at the foundation for freedom and equality. The freedom and equality which actually exists are very imperfect. But there is a legal way of gradually introducing greater freedom, greater equality, and so it is with a view to these trans-legal standards of freedom and equality that this argument is made. I mean, whether the people who make it do say that or not, I do not know, but at any rate, there is a trans-positive standard, otherwise—that is [the point]<sup>20</sup> on which I have been harping on all the time.

**Student (probably Mrs. Kaplan):** I wonder, I do not understand how Socrates distinguished unequal law, unequal law, and universal law given by gods . . . and they're just, by the same token, they are just—

**LS:** Ya.

**Student:** Not given by gods . . . like incest, not custom, custom. How to distinguish whether they are just or not. The moment of legality is taken away and they are not unwritten law, are not legal, they are not pronounced by somebody as a law.

**LS:** Ya, but laid down by the gods.

**Student:** The—and how to know where, the question is how to know the moment of distinguishing just, unjust, and this illegal given by custom. What universal is clear, that's by gods, and gods cannot be unjust.

**LS:** Ya, but this difficulty does not arise here because, [as] you saw here the argument, if there is a certain course of action which leads to bad, terrible consequences by itself, then it is clear that this is against a higher law, whereas if someone, let's say, cheats the tax collector or—

**Student:** By implication.

**LS:** Pardon?

**Student:** Implication.

**LS:** Yes, more than implication. I mean, that is, one can say that is at least suggested here. That is a much more solid law than any human law. That is at least the gist of Socrates' argument. But we have seen that there are so many questions which have to be raised. The simple argument one can list, I mean, the simple argument in favor of the Socratic thesis can be stated as follows: I have often read that in the Nazi time, the worst thing was what the Nazis did against their own laws. They did not, I mean, the mere fact that there are laws means general laws, means putting some limit to human arbitrariness, and from this point of view law as law has something rational, is something good. That is indeed very liberal, but that is one step above the mere gutter. And from this point of view, one can say the law and the sanctity of the law must be taught, generally speaking. It is a rule of thumb, as one could say from a somewhat higher point of view. A rule of thumb and not an eternal verity, but it is a good rule of thumb. Apart from all fear of punishment if you transgress the law.

**Student:** What sort of reply could we make to someone who says, well, this doctrine of the divine law, that there is no need for any human being to ever try and punish anyone for violating divine law—

**LS:** A divine law? <sup>21</sup>Ya, all right, one could say—but take an example: <sup>22</sup>let us assume there is a divine law that the gods must be honored. That, does it tell you <sup>23</sup>on what occasion you have to sacrifice goats and on what <sup>24</sup>occasions bulls? No. That is done by the law of the city, as Aristotle in his wisdom makes clear. Ya? So, and this is not as grave a thing as not to honor the gods altogether, because if you sacrifice a bull on the wrong occasion—what is in *this city* the wrong occasion; in another city it is laudatory—but if you abstain altogether from honoring the gods then you are an outcast everywhere. So that's simple. Yes?

**Student:** Does the lack of respect for the laws necessarily lead to the dissolution of the state?

**LS:** That is the same, I would say. Or am I mistaken?

**Student:** When I mean lack of respect, I mean—

**LS:** Flaunting the laws, disregarding laws—

**Student:** Well, not completely disregarding, just thinking about whether they're good or bad in relation to the individual.

**LS:** What do you mean by that? How would this look in practice?

**Student:** Excuse me?

**LS:** How would this look in practice, what you say?

**Student:** Well, most of the laws such as murder, and robbery, and things like that would be obeyed still, but—

**LS:** Would they obey—?

**Student:** It's an attitude of the citizens to question the laws of the government, not to think they're universally valid—

**LS:** Ya, but the law prohibiting murder becomes effective only by the action of the same government, legislature, and to some extent, executive, judiciary, which also takes care of other things, other laws. I mean, if you say: I don't care about the laws, then it means you don't care about any laws. Or you must have a distinction in mind: then you must say, I disobey unjust laws. All right, then one must ask: What's the criteria? And what is utterly impossible is what many people today say: your conscience. In this respect, Hobbes was dead right when he said conscience is but opinion. One <sup>25</sup> must give reason why the conscience which forbids a man to do this or not to do that is to be respected. Any murderer, any I do not know what, could say his conscience urges him on.

**Student:** You would say the state has already dissolved when people begin thinking that way?

**LS:** I beg your pardon?

**Student:** The state is already effectively dissolved—?

**LS:** Ya. If people say the law as such is no longer respectable, ya.

**Student:** And the law's the law of the state . . . .

**LS:** Well, there are intermediate stages, you know, there are grey zones, and perhaps we live in such a grey zone today. A man can say: I obey, of course, the laws much too complicated to disobey, but I am not a law fancier. That is a legitimate position.

**Student:** Don't you think order will be preserved simply because of economic laws?

**LS:** Pardon?

**Student:** Order will still be preserved for a long time after this, this event has occurred—

**LS:** Ya, that is, how much does the economic mechanism in its turn depend on laws? Unfair competition, to mention one only, ya? Cheating; and bankruptcy, and all the other beauties of economic life. These are all legal institutions. That there will be people who like to sell their bread and others who like to buy the bread, there is no doubt about that. But how will this work? You can get bread, after all, also by bread riots. You don't have to buy it. And the bakers can close their shops. Or put down the . . . . And it's also possible [that] <sup>26</sup>without the protection, the economic model doesn't work. That was what Tom Paine thought: that society, as he calls it, that meant more or less economic order, is perfectly self-sufficient, only a little bit, marginal functions . . . remain and <sup>27</sup>these have to be discharged by the state or by the government. He probably thought of murder and such like things. But Adam Smith, who was a profound student of economics, he knew of course how important the state is in order to keep the economic system going. That leads to further questions, and people usually go on from there. And <sup>28</sup>the belief in the necessity of laws with teeth in them, as a beautiful American phrase goes, is this belief not based on a belief <sup>29</sup>that men are bad, whereas everyday experience shows us how good men are? And therefore shouldn't that [mean] there is no need for laws with teeth in them? That is a great issue.

**Student (probably Mr. Klein):** Could I ask you a very different kind of question? Can we read any of these chapters, and especially the one we just read—

**LS:** Ya.

**Mr. Klein:** without forgetting that the background here is Socrates' trial?

**LS:** Ya, ya. We must always think of that. I fully agree.

**Mr. Klein:** So that, for instance, the end of this chapter has actually something to do with this.

**LS:** Pardon?

**Mr. Klein:** The end of this chapter.

**LS:** You mean the last sentence of Socrates?

**Mr. Klein:** Yes. Because, as you said, what follows from that is some laws might be unjust.

**LS:** Ya, ya. There's no doubt about that.

**Mr. Klein:** Whatever is said in those chapters is always, always—

**LS:** There's no question. But I believe Socrates is, of course, the best example to show the difficulty here—

**Mr. Klein:** Yes.

**LS:** because Socrates says, not here, but in the *Apology*, that if the law would forbid to philosophize he would transgress it.

**Mr. Klein:** That's right.

**LS:** But he does not say: If the law would interfere with freedom of speech in general.

**Mr. Klein:** That's right, yeah.

**LS:** Now—so in other words, Socrates has very little to do with the First Amendment but very much with the freedom of philosophizing. Now the freedom of speech in general, however, is much more susceptible of being legally formulated and enforced than the freedom of philosophizing, because the legislator and the judges are not equipped for distinguishing between genuine and pseudo-philosophers.

**Mr. Klein:** Except that the freedom to philosophize in Socrates' case implies the freedom to talk to other people.

**LS:** Ya, but—sure, but here there is a question. The freedom to talk about, of everyone to talk about everything?

**Mr. Klein:** Well, that is not clear.

**LS:** I think it is rather clear. And the most detailed discussion from a legal point of view is in Plato's *Laws*, which Plato wrote probably when he was older than the Socrates of that time, and there atheism and some other things, but especially atheism, and especially [not] believing [in] divine providence [are] punishable offenses. Punishable offenses.<sup>30</sup> But then Plato . . . as it were, if the man who is such an *epikoros*, such a doubter of these fundamental verities, is an honest man, as he admits he could be, then he will come into a kind of not insane asylum, as they have in Soviet Russia, but a special institution, mental institution, in which he is gradually shown the truth, and that's all right. But perfect freedom of speech regarding fundamental matters, no. That was always regarded as incompatible with the *polis*. I believe the first writer, as far as I know, who openly demanded almost complete freedom of speech was Milton in *Areopagitica*, and on the basis of the angels. But it is rather—but of course he excluded naturally papists, and who else? I suppose also atheists, ya; I do not remember now exactly. But that is of course a very long way. And<sup>31</sup> that came out only in the modern centuries, especially because—well, the hypocrisies, of course, going with the prohibition; and also that it is not good for trade to put any limitations on speech. And Holland, which was so extremely tolerant, where Descartes could find a refuge and Spinoza could live and die in his bed and so on, that was then due to the argument showing the virtues of toleration. And then that became a formula in the eighteenth century: here is trade plus tolerance, and there is religion plus intolerance. Make your choice. Even<sup>32</sup> in Kant that is still true.

**Mr. Klein:** But is he, one must come back to Socrates.

**LS:** Ya.

**Mr. Klein:** Is he—in Socrates' trial, there is always the possibility of saying on the one hand that Socrates *did* violate the laws of the *polis*, and it's always possible [on the other] to say he did *not* violate them, and the *Memorabilia* as a whole [is] a kind of commentary on this.

**LS:** Commentary. Ya, sure. Ya, but on the other hand, you have seen also how inadequate from a forensic point of view Xenophon's defense is.

**Mr. Klein:** Yes, yes.

**LS:** Precisely because the law forbade certain thoughts; regarding the actions, Socrates sacrificed, although it is not so sure that he did it very strictly. I believe the *Euthypron* indicates that he did not always sacrifice. You know the story of Proteus at the end there? So he was not quite correct . . . but the opinions, the thoughts, which cannot be controlled unless the individual speaks, to say nothing of writes. But if someone abstains from writing and speaking and performs the actions prescribed by the law, what can, I mean, what can we do? <sup>33</sup>Well, the Reign of Terror, Inquisition. But that is no longer a decent possibility. I would say Socrates was guilty according to the law, and that does not necessarily mean that he was an unjust man. On the contrary. But also not in this sense that Socrates revolted, as some people have it: Socrates the rebel, he revolted against an unjust law, and he was one of the—how do you call it?—of the martyrs for freedom of conscience, freedom of speech. That's very misleading. The *polis* is restrictive. And it is, if one uses these Bergsonian terms, the closed society, not an open society. And of course there [are] all kinds—fortunately the *polis* is not always Sparta—there are varieties, and <sup>34</sup>as Plato again indicates in the *Republic*, in democracy an amazing freedom is possible. You know? Even donkeys have the right to push you from the—how do you call it? [Laughter]

**Mr. Williamson:** Sidewalk.

**LS:** Ya, ya. Yes?

**Student (probably Mr. Berns):** Just a small point: some people have made the rather convincing argument that the First Amendment itself prohibits only Congress from abridging freedom of speech, and it was understood to be not all freedom of speech but only speech pertaining to what citizens have to know in order to fulfill their citizen functions—

**LS:** Ya, sure.

**Student:** and, but the state governments were left free to prosecute speech interfering with public order.

**LS:** Ya, ya, I know that . . . .

**Student:** And it was only after the Fourteenth Amendment was passed where the application of the first ten was supposed to apply to the states that this that this notion was broadened beyond what the Founding Fathers conceived.

**LS:** Ya, I know, I know. But regarding that, there's one point [that]<sup>35</sup> you mentioned: To what does freedom of speech refer? Now I mean, does freedom of speech mean the freedom to incite everybody? Of course not. Does it mean the freedom to use obscene language? Not necessarily, to be cautious, ya?

**Student:** Originally it included not a lot.

**LS:** Not, sure. But I mean, if we take today, that is at least—not necessarily because there is a controversy about that. But surely the freedom of political propaganda for one party or another, that's all right. Now the Athenians had this thing, they had a beautiful word, <sup>36</sup>they spoke of *parrhesia*, which means the habit or the faculty to say everything. And that had to obtain in the Assembly, the *Ekklēsia*, and that was granted even by critics of democracy: that on the whole, in the Assembly, this *parrhesia* prevailed. But that doesn't mean it could be used outside of it, because that was a sacred office, that of a member of the Assembly, and to draw any conclusions from what you could do there to what you could do outside of it would be entirely wrong.

**Student:** Yeah, I think that's really quite interesting, because the most interesting study that I know . . . what they seem to have in mind in writing the First Amendment was to apply a rule that had been meant to apply only to parliamentary assemblies to the whole people, as if the whole people were a kind of parliamentary assembly.

**LS:** One community. Now, I think—you said something?

**Student (probably Mrs. Kaplan):** Well, I only wanted to say that . . . shouldn't have any who told legislators to regulate . . . the freedom of speech, because it is really difficult to say when a philosophical discussion turns, or where a philosophical discussion leads to. So that where are going to regimes, to states, who outcome . . .

**LS:** Ya, but that—

**Student:** . . . say no . . . don't talk too much.

**LS:** But, no, no, for many people succeeded in making legal distinctions. For example, say that you could write books longer than 300 pages in Latin without any censorship, but if you wrote in the vulgar tongue, and especially short pamphlets, that was strictly subjected. It was one thing. And so it can be done.

**Student:** I regret that the *Communist Manifesto* and . . . [Laughter]

**LS:** What a pity! Well, shall we try chapter five?



**Reader:** “By such words and actions he encouraged justice in those who resorted to his company.  
He did also try to make his companions efficient in affairs, as I will now show.” (IV.4.25-IV.5.1)

**LS:** In—skilled in *doing*. You remember at the beginning of chapter three he said he made them skilled in speaking, skilled in doing, and skilled in devising or contriving. And now what was there in the center, skilled in doing, comes here first.

**Reader:** “For holding that it is good for anyone who means to do honourable work to have self-control, he made it clear to his companions—” (IV.5.1)

**LS:** Ya, self-control; that is, I would translate it “continence” in all these cases, otherwise we will get mixed up. Yes?

**Reader:** “he made it clear to his companions, in the first place, that he had been assiduous in self-discipline; moreover, in his conversation he exhorted his companions to cultivate continence [self-control in translation] above all things.  
Thus he bore in mind continually the aids to virtue, and put all his companions in mind of them.” (IV.5.1-2)

**LS:** All, <sup>37a</sup> a term which he will not use in the following chapter. He taught that in every case: be continent, don’t overeat, don’t drink too much, and so on. Yes?

**Reader:**

I recall in particular the substance of a conversation that he once had with Euthydemus on continence.<sup>iv</sup>

“Tell me, Euthydemus,” he said, “do you think that freedom is a noble and splendid possession both for individuals and for communities?”

“Yes, I think it is, in the highest degree.”

“Then do you think that the man is free who is ruled by bodily pleasures and is unable to do what is best because of them?”

“By no means.”

“Possibly, in fact, to do what is best appears to you to be freedom, and so you think that to have masters who will prevent such activity is bondage?”

“I am sure of it.”

“You feel sure then that the incontinent are bond slaves?”

“Of course, naturally.”

“And do you think that the incontinent are merely prevented from doing what is most honourable, or are also forced to do what is dishonourable?” (IV.5.2-4)

**LS:** What is most base, ya, that is. Ya.

**Reader:**

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<sup>iv</sup> In translation: “self-control”

“I think that they are forced to do that just as much as they are prevented from doing the other.”

“What sort of masters are they, in your opinion, who prevent the best and enforce the worst?”

“The worst possible, of course.”

“And what sort of slavery do you believe to be the worst?”

“Slavery to the worst masters, I think.”

“The worst slavery, therefore, is the slavery endured by the incontinent?”

“I think so.” (IV.5.4-5)

**LS:** Yes. So this is the first point he makes: incontinence is the worst slavery, incompatible with freedom, even with freedom narrowly understood. Yes?

**Reader:**

“As for Wisdom, the greatest blessing, does not incontinence exclude it and drive men to the opposite? Or don't you think that incontinence prevents them from attending to useful things and understanding them, by drawing them away to things pleasant, and often so stuns their perception of good and evil that they choose the worse instead of the better?”

“That does happen.” (IV.5.6)

**LS:** Ya. So here <sup>38</sup>he goes over to a new theme: wisdom. And in parentheses he calls it *the* greatest good. That's the only utterance of Socrates about the greatest good, and the greatest good is wisdom. Of course, we do not know what he understands by wisdom, but this must be kept in mind. We will see later on he makes a<sup>39</sup>—from the immediate context it would appear that the objects of wisdom are the *useful* things, the good and bad things, rather than the noble things. And the good things are to be preferred not only to the bodily pleasures, as he said before, but to *the* pleasures. It seems to be a very ascetic view which Socrates here proposes. You see, Socrates doesn't give Euthydemus an opportunity to agree or to disagree as to wisdom's being such a great good, the greatest good. You'll remember in the previous discussion, in chapter two, in the elenctic discussion, Socrates had shown to Euthydemus that wisdom is a very questionable good, because some people have suffered, have gone into slavery because they were wise, and some powerful tyrants or kings try to get hold of them and they live then for them in perpetual slavery because of their wisdom. Now, the very same Socrates says now that wisdom is the greatest good, implying *even* if some wise man who is not very shrewd would fall into the hands of the King of Persia on account of his wisdom. Yes?

**Reader:** “With Prudence, Euthydemus—”

**LS:** I think, what does he—?

**Reader (Mr. Williamson):** Prudence.

**LS:** Well, that is *sophrōsynē*, which I would translate by “moderation” in order to make [it] like earlier. So here he distinguishes clearly what he had not done before, in the third part, between wisdom and moderation, as something different. Yes?

**Reader:**

“With moderation<sup>v</sup>, Euthydemus, who, shall we say, has less to do than the incontinent? For I presume that the actions prompted by moderation<sup>vi</sup> and incontinence are exact opposites?”

“I agree with that too.”

“To caring for what is right is there any stronger hindrance, do you think, than incontinence?”

“Indeed I do not.”

“And do you think there can be aught worse for a man than that which causes him to choose the harmful rather than the useful, and persuades him to care for the one and to be careless of the other, and forces him to do the opposite of what moderation<sup>vii</sup> dictates?”

“Nothing.”

“And is it not likely that moderation, continence<sup>viii</sup>—”

**LS:** Ya, is continence. Then here, Xenophon does it all the time, he uses them synonymously and then he makes, uses them in a different sense. And he has his reasons for that, I suppose. Yes?

**Reader:**

“And is it not likely that continence causes actions the opposite of those which are due to incontinence?”

“Certainly.”

“Then is not the cause of the opposite actions presumably a very great blessing?”

“Yes, presumably.”

“Consequently we may presume, Euthydemus, that continence<sup>ix</sup> is a very great blessing to a man?” (IV.5.7-8)

**LS:** Ya, is very good to a human being. That’s not the greatest good, but is very good for a human being. Human being means men in general, free men or slaves, men or woman. Ya?

**Student:** Isn’t the thing which is the greatest good for the human being—

**LS:** Who?

**Student:** Or whatever—

**LS:** Wisdom, wisdom is the greatest good period.

**Student:** Is it linked to human beings?

**LS:** Not necessarily. Wisdom may be—human beings can be wise, but think of the gods. The gods are supposed to be wise. Are they supposed to be continent?

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<sup>v</sup> In translation: “prudence”

<sup>vi</sup> In translation: “prudence”

<sup>vii</sup> In translation: “prudence”

<sup>viii</sup> In translation: “self-control”

<sup>ix</sup> In translation: “self-control”

**Student:** No, not according to Homer.

**LS:** No, no, not—I mean, <sup>40</sup>you must never believe what Homer says about these matters. [Laughter] You have heard what Plato says. No, but the gods are, of course, precisely because they are truly wise, and they can't be incontinent. It would be a very low kind of praise of the gods to say that they are continent. Continence itself is beneath them, [and] not only incontinence.

**Student:** I was just wondering if there's any wisdom itself which is apart from the human things or human considerations, which somehow is highest of all—

**LS:** <sup>41</sup>Hitherto we have not yet seen anything to this effect in Xenophon. Ya? Yes, yes.

**Reader:**

“Has it ever occurred to you, Euthydemus—?”

“What?”

“That though pleasure is the one and only goal to which incontinence is thought to lead men, she herself cannot bring them to it, whereas nothing produces pleasure so surely as continence<sup>x</sup>?” (IV.5.9)

**LS:** So after Socrates had thrown out pleasure completely as a wholly irrelevant thing, he says now this very continence which he praised so highly is a royal road to pleasure too. Yes.

**Reader:**

“How so?”

“Incontinence will not let them endure hunger or thirst or desire or lack of sleep, which are the sole causes of pleasure in eating and drinking and sexual indulgence, and in resting and sleeping, after a time of waiting and resistance until the moment comes when these will give the greatest possible satisfaction; and thus she prevents them from experiencing any pleasure worthy to be mentioned in the most elementary and recurrent forms of enjoyment. But continence alone causes them to endure the sufferings I have named, and therefore she alone causes them to experience any pleasure worth mentioning in such enjoyments.”

“What you say is entirely true.”

“Moreover, the delights of learning something good and excellent, and of studying some of the means whereby a man knows how to regulate his body well and manage his household successfully, to be useful to his friends and city and to defeat his enemies — knowledge that yields not only very great benefits but very great pleasures—” (IV.5.8-9)

**LS:** You see, [they]<sup>42</sup> are different kinds of pleasures: not the bodily pleasures but those which accompany noble deeds, ya?

**Reader:**

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<sup>x</sup> In translation: “self-control”

“these are the delights of the continent<sup>xi</sup>; but the incontinent have no part in them. For who, should we say, has less concern with these than he who has no power of cultivating them because all his serious purposes are centered in the pleasures that lie nearest?”

“Socrates,” said Euthydemus, “I think you mean that he who is at the mercy of the bodily pleasures has no concern whatever with virtue in any form.”

“Yes, Euthydemus; for how can an incontinent man be any better than the dumbest beast? How can he who fails to consider the things that matter most, and strives—”

**LS:** Ya. The most excellent things, let us rather say.

**Reader:**

“and strives by every means to do the things that are most pleasant, be better than the stupidest of creatures? No, only the self-controlled, uh, no, only the continent have power to consider the things that matter most, and, sorting them out after their kind, by word and deed alike to prefer the good and reject the evil.” (IV.5.10-11)

**LS:** Yes. Now <sup>43</sup>that is important, <sup>44</sup>because it may throw some light on what Socrates understood by wisdom: contemplating, considering the most excellent things, and then by speech and deed, sorting out according to tribes, to choose the good things and abstain from the bad ones. What is to be sorted out in deed and speech? The good things? He does mean of course a distinction between the good and the bad things, <sup>45</sup>sorting out the good things from the bad things, but it means that one must sort out the good things according to their kinds. What has this to do with contemplating or considering the most excellent things? That doesn’t seem to be clear. And what does it mean to sort out or to pick out by speech and by *deed*? Well, if you remember the *Oeconomicus*, there we would understand that. There, <sup>46</sup>Ischomachus and his wife, they distinguished the various parts of property which they possessed according to kinds or tribes; and they did it first, saying: These are the shoes for every day, these are the shoes for holidays, these are, and so on and so on. And then after having distinguished them they put them in different places. That would be to distinguish them by deed, ya? This would be. But let us see whether he will come through with that.

**Reader:** “And thus, he said, men become supremely good and happy and skilled in discussion. The very word—”

**LS:** Ya, in *dialegesthai*, in conversation, ya.

**Reader:** “The very word *dialegesthai*<sup>xii</sup>, according to him, owes its name to the practice of meeting together for common deliberation, sorting, discussing things after their kind: and therefore one should be ready and prepared for this and be zealous for it; for it makes for excellence, leadership and skill in discussion.” (IV.5.12)

**LS:** And best and most good at leadership, best at leadership. Does he not bring the word in? They always change around a bit. “*Aristous te kai hēgemonikōtātous kai dialektikōtātous*.” Does he not have—?

<sup>xi</sup> In translation: “self-controlled”

<sup>xii</sup> In translation: “discussion”

**Mr. Williamson:** No, he, he—

**Student (probably Mr. Klein):** He leaves out men.

**LS:** Pardon?

**Mr. Klein:** He leaves out men.

**Mr. Williamson:** Men, and leaves out the superlative, really. It makes for excellence for leadership. That would be . . . .

**LS:** Ya, because that is important, because at the beginning of this paragraph he spoke of best, and most happy, and most able to converse. And now he says best ,and most excellent in leadership, and most able to converse. So he replaces happiness, most happy, by most able to lead. And that is a subject of some consideration. Is happiness identical with success in leadership? That he seems to suggest here. That is a long, long question. We have discussed that when we read chapter two of the Third Book, where Socrates says it is the business of the leader, of the man who leads, to make happy those whom he leads. But he didn't say anything about the happiness of the leader. And now here this happiness of the leader comes to the fore. And now, the question: What is this? Here dialectics comes up as such, and what precisely is it? It consists in sorting out the most important things, I suppose, according to tribes or kinds. This I believe is a defensible conclusion from this very dark passage, not to go into other things, ya.

**Student:** If you take a shoe and you put it in a special box, it's necessary the shoe have a unity, somehow be like a particle such that you could take it and put it into that box. But if you begin to talk of qualities, these qualities may not be separated from the, from other things like a particle is separated from other things—

**LS:** Ya, what do you mean by that?

**Student:** They might have windows. Well, I mean that somehow, if prudence and courage and justice perhaps are not independent or cannot be thought of in a way such that they could be taken as a particle, they couldn't be placed into the different boxes the way we one would put shoes in different boxes.

**LS:** Ya, but still, can one not—perhaps it doesn't mean it so simply as Ischomachus' ordering his household goods, but can one not distinguish these things?

**Student:** Yeah, but when one has a circle of colors where there's light colors and then dark colors, one could distinguish the spectrum going from one to another, but one could not pick out and say, there is the place where it is this way, and then just give a quantitative evaluation of it the way one would—

**LS:** Ya, but I believe this is the consideration which you have, is very far from what Xenophon says and does not—<sup>47</sup>at least I do not see how.

**Student:** I think it's far from what Xenophon says. I'm not sure that it's far from what's at issue.

**LS:** That I do not know. Then give an example.

**Student:** Well—

**LS:** For example, he will discuss in the immediate sequel piety and justice. Piety and justice are two different things, and he distinguishes them.

**Student:** The way I would distinguish light from dark, but one couldn't distinguish . . .

**LS:** Not—please don't use metaphors. Simply stick with it: here's piety, here's justice.

**Student:** But could it be treated that way, really, if they were part of these things—

**LS:** According to Xenophon, yes.

**Student:** Do you think so?

**LS:** I do not know. I know too little about piety, just as I know too little about charity. So we must. So now let us try to get an inkling of what is in store for us in the rest of the book.

**Reader:** “I will try also to show how he encouraged his companions to become skilled in discussion.” (IV.6.1)

**LS:** In more *dialektika*, and this was the other point in the beginning of chapter three: to make them skilled in doing, to make them skilled in speaking, and that is here. This is a kind of speaking skill. That is the subject of this chapter. Here we will also see, we have seen, that he says: I shall *try* to show that. That he says in no other case because—and this is of course a reference to the particular difficulty of this chapter. Yes?

**Reader:** “Socrates held that those who know what any given thing is can also expound it to others—”

**LS:** Now, excuse me, let us translate a little more literally. Those who know what *each* of the beings is, what each of the beings is. Whatever that may mean, that is what Socrates probably regarded as wisdom. And it's still extremely general and we must see whether we cannot make sense of it. Yes.

**Reader:** “on the other hand, those who do not know are misled themselves and mislead others. For this reason he never gave up considering with his companions what any given thing is.” (IV.6.1)

**LS:** What each of the beings is, yes? Ya, now one moment here. For this reason, he never ceased considering with his companions what each of the beings is. Now if this is true, Xenophon has

misled us completely, because his Socrates never ceased considering other things rather than what each of the beings is. There is a possible help in the reading of the best manuscript, but only of that, and this is relegated to the apparatus by all editors, as far as I know. And this other reading is *skopon en toîs synoûsi*: he never ceased considering *in the midst* of the companions. That is to say, the what is of the beings in the midst of the companions, and that would very well—say, if he talks to Crito about how good it is to get a counter-sycophant, or to Aristarchus [about] how he can solve the problem caused by his female relatives—you remember the fourteen—while he did this he still considered what, some other things. I mean, his mind was not completely preoccupied by these helpful activities. That makes sense, I think. Yes?

**Reader:** “To go through all his definitions would be an arduous task. I will say only enough to indicate his method of analysis.” (IV.6.1)

**LS:** Ya, analysis is—and method also is much too technical. The manner of his, let us say, consideration, of his looking, looking at these things. Yes. Only so much will he say. Yes.

**Reader:**

His examination of Piety—to take that first—was more or less as follows:

“Tell me, Euthydemus, what sort of thing is Piety, in your opinion?”

“A most<sup>xiii</sup> excellent thing, By Zeus,”<sup>xiv</sup> he replied.

**LS:** Ya, most noble, most noble, ya.

**Reader:**

“Can you say what sort of man is pious?”

“He who worships the gods, I think.”

“May a man worship the gods according to his own will and pleasure?”

“No, there are laws to be observed in worshipping the gods!”

“Then will not he who knows these laws know how he must worship the gods?”

“I think so.”

“Then does he who knows how he must worship the gods think that he must do so according to his knowledge, and not otherwise?”

“He does indeed.”

“And does everyone worship the gods as he thinks he ought, and not otherwise?”

“I think so.”

“Then will he who knows what is lawful about the gods worship the gods lawfully?”

“Certainly.”

“Then does not he who worships lawfully worship as he ought?”

“Of course.”

“Yes, but he who worships as he ought is pious?”

“Certainly.”

“Shall we therefore rightly define the pious man as one who knows what is lawful concerning the gods?”

“I at any rate think so.” (IV.6.2-4)

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<sup>xiii</sup> In translation: “very”

<sup>xiv</sup> In translation: “To be sure”



**LS:** Yes. That is the way in which Euthydemus is shown the identity of virtue and knowledge. The virtue of piety is identical with knowledge of the laws regarding the worship of the gods. And we don't even have to subject this to a special analysis because Xenophon will gradually make clear, by bringing in other examples, what is defective. But our common sense reaction, I believe, to this would be that a man—precisely the people who know what is lawful regarding the gods may very well *disregard* these laws, and they are impious. Proof: Aristodemos, you will remember, who didn't sacrifice to the gods and who did not use divination and heaped ridicule on those who did. He knew the law and yet he did not do it. So there must be some subtle difference between knowledge and virtue. Ya?

**Student:** Well, I thought the point that was brought out in the *Meno* to indicate the meaning of the statement that knowledge is virtue, is simply that knowledge is the essence of virtue. It may not be all of virtue, but it's impossible to have virtue without that knowledge, without that knowledge.

**LS:** Ya, that can easily be admitted, but that it should be the essence is, is another decision.

**Student:** Well, I used the word just as a—

**LS:** No, no, I don't quarrel with the word, but I mean, that's the main point you made. Ya, but look at the many people who have the necessary *knowledge* in the sense in which Xenophon uses the term here regarding what is to be done and don't do it. So the essence, as you put it, would be rather to *do* the right thing and not merely to know it.

**Student:** That—I think Plato would claim that, that would not be the essence, that there are men who are brought up in Persia in such a fashion that they do the right thing but they have no reason, no idea why. And whereas that would be a nice thing to add to the essence, and perhaps even in a certain sense it would be crucial to add that. It wouldn't be the essence. The essence would be the knowledge.

**LS:** Ya, that is [LS chuckles], that is a long question. How do you understand this conversation, that is also supposed to be Socrates speaking here about piety?

**Student:** Well, it appears that piety is being spoken of in the same way as virtue in the *Meno*. That is, it turns out that the pious man is a knower, primarily a knower.

**LS:** Ya, but of what?

**Student:** Of laws, the laws of—

**LS:** Wait, <sup>48</sup>is the knowledge of which the *Meno* [treats], or what Plato says in the *Meno*, knowledge of laws?

**Student:** No.

**LS:** . . . For sure. So they're—yes?

**Student:** When we're presented with the example of the man who seems to know what is right and then does otherwise, isn't it possible that we can still say that his knowledge of what is right is limited and that he really doesn't see to the core of what is right? A man, say, who might know that certain laws are not to be disobeyed, or he might know what is a law and disobey it anyway: Can't we still say that his knowledge is in some way limited, it's not complete, it's not wisdom?

**LS:** Ya, that would mean—to take a somewhat profane example—that, say, the greatest legal authorities, say, deans of law schools, would be the most outstanding in justice in the whole country. We might hope that this is so, but there is no obvious, no essential, necessity for that, is <sup>49</sup>[there]?

**Student:** No. On the other hand, they may not understand the nature of law in the same way that someone who read Plato or read Aristotle on the law, and they understand it merely as a method or something like that. I was just wondering about the character of knowledge, may not be complete with regard to these things.

**LS:** Ya, but still, here the question is: piety is identified with the knowledge of certain laws or customs, not with anything else. Not with right or wrong—that is, knowledge of the laws, customs, and that remains. Ya. <sup>50</sup>I believe, we will stop now. Then he goes over, just as he did in the preceding discussion, first piety, then justice. In the next [section]<sup>51</sup>, we speak of justice. And then he comes to *wisdom*, and then to the good and the noble, and then to courage. And that is the end of the discussions with Euthydemus. There are some appendices which are worth considering at the end of the chapter, and then that's the end of the conversations altogether, because the next chapter, chapter seven, is only a report, a narrative of Xenophon [on] how Socrates made his companions clever at *devising*, at contriving. There is no conversation given there, but that means what Socrates said regarding the study of mathematics and astronomy, and you will be quite surprised to hear that [LS chuckles]. And then there is only the epilogue and the peroration. Perhaps, I hope, if everything goes well, we can finish it before the end of the semester or end of the academic year.

[end of tape]

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<sup>1</sup> Deleted “if”

<sup>2</sup> Deleted “has”

<sup>3</sup> Deleted “where”

<sup>4</sup> Deleted “and”

<sup>5</sup> Deleted “difficulty”

<sup>6</sup> Deleted “it”

<sup>7</sup> Deleted “but this one has to”

<sup>8</sup> Deleted “and”

<sup>9</sup> Deleted “it is a, it is”

<sup>10</sup> Deleted “there are no longer”

<sup>11</sup> Deleted “there are these two”

<sup>12</sup> Deleted “here”

<sup>13</sup> Deleted “is very much”

<sup>14</sup> Deleted “but for”

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- 15 Deleted "in terms of"  
16 Deleted "that he"  
17 Deleted "what"  
18 Deleted "it must"  
19 Deleted "you don't"  
20 Deleted "one"  
21 Deleted "ya, of course not, that is"  
22 Deleted "you have"  
23 Deleted "how many"  
24 Deleted "sacrifice"  
25 Deleted "must have to"  
26 Deleted "without some"  
27 Deleted "that"  
28 Deleted "if not"  
29 Deleted "in man's"  
30 Deleted "and if there"  
31 Deleted "it came"  
32 Deleted "back"  
33 Deleted "a simple, then"  
34 Deleted "in"  
35 Deleted "what"  
36 Deleted "they called"  
37 Deleted "which is"  
38 Deleted "that"  
39 Deleted "and"  
40 Deleted "these were, this"  
41 Deleted "I have"  
42 Deleted "that"  
43 Deleted "this seems to be"  
44 Deleted "that"  
45 Deleted "but one must"  
46 Deleted "they made, distinguished"  
47 Deleted "does"  
48 Deleted "does"  
49 Deleted "it"  
50 Deleted "that"  
51 Deleted "chapter"

## Session 22: no date

**Leo Strauss:** [in progress] —he never, in the other case, he never speaks of trying, that's an indication of the particular difficulty. And then he discusses two subjects treated dialectically by Socrates: first piety and then justice, and that is a natural order from what we have seen earlier in this book. In the preceding chapter, he had mentioned in passing that wisdom is the greatest good. This is not very helpful as long as we do not know what wisdom is, and wisdom <sup>1</sup>[is] the subject to which he turns in paragraph seven of the sixth chapter. Yes?

### Reader:

“And what of wisdom? How shall we describe it? Tell me, does it seem to you that the wise are wise about what they know, or are some wise about what they do not know?”

“About what they know, obviously; for how can a man be wise about the things he doesn't know?”

“The wise, then, are wise by knowledge?”

“How else can a man be wise if not by knowledge?”

“Do you think that wisdom is anything but that by which men are wise?”

“No.”

“It follows that Wisdom is Knowledge?”

“I think so.”

“Then do you think it possible for a man to know all things?”

“Of course not — nor even a fraction of them.”

“So an all-wise man is an impossibility?”

“Of course, of course.”

“Consequently everyone is wise just in so far as he knows?”

“I think so.” (IV.6.7)

**LS:** Ya. So that is the whole story. Now, what is wisdom? *Epistēmē*, knowledge, that is said very clearly here. And that which does not come out in the translation is that it is *epistēmē tōn ontōn*, knowledge or science of the *beings* which is not deprived of consequences. <sup>2</sup>Here nothing is said of the limitation of wisdom to the human things but simply of beings as beings—in principle, of all beings but, in fact, as Euthydemus answers, man is not capable of such a universal knowledge. But in principle, *sophia*, wisdom, would be *epistēmē* of all *onta*, all beings. Now we have read a suggestion to this effect already before, at the beginning of the sixth chapter, <sup>3</sup>Socrates never ceased considering what *each* of the beings is, and each—that means all. All, each being—that is, all beings. And there was no limitation to the human things in particular. But in order to understand that, that doesn't mean, of course, that Socrates considered each egg in each basket and so on, which each being <sup>4</sup>could be thought to mean, because there is no evidence for that. The only evidence we have here are the examples given here, where Socrates discusses what is piety, what is justice, and other things. In other words, not this or that particular act of piety or of justice, or this particular pious man or just man, but that which holds together all pious acts, all pious men *as* pious, and correspondingly regarding the just. So in other words, that has to do with the *kinds* or *tribes* of things. We'll remember from the end of the preceding chapter, where Socrates had said that dialectics is derived from the Greek word *dialegein*, meaning sorting out things according to tribes or kinds. So Socrates looks at the world, everything, sorting all things in the wide sense of the word, sorting them out according to tribes

or kinds and then looking at the kinds. This is his peculiar wisdom. Whether this wisdom is complete necessarily or necessarily incomplete, we cannot say, because we do not have Socrates' answer. We have only Euthydemus' answer. We may very well leave it open.

So these kinds, these characters of the kinds: this would seem to be the most excellent things of which we had spoken at the end of the preceding chapter. So we can now say that the wise man considers the kinds of beings. When Socrates had spoken of the pious man and the just man in the preceding section of this chapter, he had not spoken of knowledge in the sense of understanding, *epistamai* or *epistēmē* in Greek, but he had spoken only of *eidenai* and even *oiesthai*, knowing in the wide sense. This is "I know the way from here to there"; or *oiesthai* means indeed believing [and] has not the meaning of knowledge at all. So the pious man, he knows the customs regarding the worship of the gods, he does not know and does not have to know what piety is. That is the matter of the *dialektikos*, not of the *eusebēs*. Just as the pious man does not have to know what a god is, he can leave it at the traditional notion without raising this question at all. So I think we know now what in the view of [the] Xenophontic Socrates wisdom means. I believe it is in full agreement with what was suggested indirectly in the first chapter of the whole work, when Xenophon opposes sobriety, the *sophrōsynē* of Socrates, to the madness of what we would call the pre-Socratics, and where it appeared that it is mad to say, "being is one," just as it is mad to say, "being is innumerable." And also it is mad to say, "being is always the same," and the opposite, that it is in constant change. That is something in between, a moderate view. There are some things which are always the same, and all other things come into being and perish. And these things which never change, these are in the first place at any rate these classes, or the class characters, which are suggested in chapter five and six here. I suppose that could give occasion for quite a discussion, and it might be for the benefit of us all, surely of me, if we had such discussion. [Brief pause] Well, if the challenge is not accepted [laughter], we must go on.

Now we turn then to the next passage. And here you see right at paragraph eight, right at the beginning, Socrates addresses Euthydemus by name. He had not done this since the very beginning of his conversation, in paragraph two, and he will do it only once more in this chapter, at the beginning of paragraph 10. I'm inclined to believe that this is the plan of this section: first is the discussion <sup>5</sup>of piety, justice, and wisdom; then in the two following sections, the discussion of the good and the beautiful; and in the final section, the discussion of courage or manliness. Let us now first see what we learn here from Xenophon about the good.

**Reader:**

"Now to seek the Good, Euthydemus: is this the way?"

"What do you mean?"

"Does it seem to you that the same thing is useful to everyone?"

"No."

"In fact, what is useful to one may sometimes be hurtful to another, don't you think?"

"Assuredly."

"Should you call anything good except what is useful?"

"No."

"Consequently what is useful is good for him to whom it is useful?"

"I think so."

“Consider the—” (IV.6.8-9)

**LS:** Now. Now let us wait one—so <sup>6</sup>whatever is good is not always good to all. We have read this before in the Third Book, chapter eight. For example, something may be good for hunger and bad for fever, something may be good for disease of the eye and bad for the intestinal diseases, and so on. So the good is varied. The *beings* to which he referred in the preceding <sup>7</sup>section, in the section on wisdom, are not changeable, not variable. The good things as good things are essentially variable. Now if someone would say: But Socrates said the best, the greatest good is wisdom—is this variable too? I believe we would have to say yes, because for some people wisdom is not a good. They would not have any use for it and would even be disturbed by it. And even men fit for wisdom, even for them wisdom is not always a good because they may, as we have seen, be captured by the Persian king who will use them for his purposes on the ground of their wisdom. So there is nothing good which is good in all circumstances for all men. But what wisdom is, what piety is, what justice is, and so on, that is always the same. Now let us see the supplement to that.

**Reader:**

“Consider the Beautiful: can we define it in any other way? Or is it possible to name a beautiful body, for instance, or vessel, or anything else that you know to be beautiful for all purposes?”

“Of course not.”

“Then does the beauty in using anything consist in using it for just that purpose for which that particular thing is useful?”

“Certainly.”

“And is a thing beautiful for any other purpose than that for which it is beautiful to use that particular thing?”

“For no other purpose whatever.”

“The useful, then, is beautiful for any purpose for which it is useful?” (IV.6.9)

**LS:** Yes, he doesn’t bring out—in Greek he uses here different terms. In the case of the good, he spoke of *ōphelimon*, from [*ophelēisthai*], helping, and here he speaks of *chrēsimon*, which is derivative of *chrēsthai*, which means using. So if we will admit now perhaps a distinction between the helpful and useful, the helpful having a higher rank than the useful, one could bring it out. It is not said here explicitly, as it was said in the conversation with Aristippus, that the good and the beautiful are identical. That is, they are just juxtaposed. So this is the central section of this whole chapter: the good and the beautiful. And now we come to the last section, at the beginning of which Socrates addresses Euthydemus again by *name*.

**Reader:**

“Next comes Courage, Euthydemus. Do you think it a beautiful thing?”

“I prefer to say very beautiful.”

“So you think Courage useful for no mean purposes?”

“Of course — or rather, for the greatest.”

“Then do you think that in the pressure of terrors and dangers it is useful to be ignorant of them?”

“By no means.”

“So those who feel no fear of such things because they are ignorant of them are not courageous?”

“Of course not, for in that case many madmen and cowards would be courageous.”

“What of those who are afraid when there is no ground for fear?”

“Still less, of course.”

“Then do you think that those who are good in the presence of terrors and dangers are courageous, and those who are bad are cowards?”

“Certainly.”

“And do you think that any are good in the presence of such things, except those who can deal with them well?”

“None but these.”

“And bad, except such as deal badly with them?”

“These and none others.”

“Then do both classes behave as they think they must?”

“How can they behave otherwise?”

“Then do those who cannot behave well know how they must behave?”

“Surely not.”

“So those who know how they must behave are just those who can?”

“Yes, only they.”

“Well now, do those who are not utterly mistaken deal badly with such things?”

“I think not.”

“So those who behave badly are utterly mistaken?”

“Presumably.”

“It follows that those who know how to deal well with terrors and dangers are courageous, and those who utterly mistake the way are cowards?”

“That is my opinion.” (IV.6.9-10)

**LS:** So this is again a discussion which in a very general way amounts to saying that virtue is knowledge. Courage is a knowledge of certain things, and this is the same as in the case of piety and justice, as we have seen before. But there are a few differences. In the first place, here there is no reference to laws. We do not need laws to tell us that an exploding bomb is to be avoided. The law may do something about bomb throwers, but it doesn't have to tell us what is fear-inspiring and what is confidence-inspiring—this at least is independent of all laws. But the second point is perhaps even more important: the cowards, we can say, are ignoramuses and the courageous men are the knowers. But what precisely do both kinds of men know? Say, that something is terrible—say, death is terrible—or not. I suspect there is no difference. But the courageous man says that is not the decisive consideration; there's something more *noble* which has to be considered. And the coward, by implication, denies it. In the case of justice and piety, Socrates has spoken only of the just men and the pious men, not of the opposite, the unjust and impious. Here he speaks of the opposite, and thus he makes clear what is going on in the souls of the vicious.

Now what is it, what goes on? The coward knows that it is a disgrace to run away from battle; that he knows as well as the courageous man. But what prevents him from acting on it? Because he is concerned with his self-preservation and regards this as the overriding consideration. Now if we apply this to the unjust and impious man, the just man, the pious man, know the laws

regarding gods and men and comply with them. But what about the opposites? They also know these things. But they think that <sup>8</sup>it is not worthwhile to obey them. There are more important considerations. Let me state it perhaps a little bit more clearly. All act in the manner which they believe is most advantageous to them, the just and the unjust, the pious and the impious, and the cowards and the courageous. But the impious and the unjust, for example, they know the laws as well as the pious and the just, but they think it is advantageous to them to transgress these laws. And the Greek word used here and in the earlier discussion, *dei*, as it ought to be; this is not limited to a moral “ought,” I mean, what should be done. And the consideration comprising both is what should be done to my *advantage*. The pious man believes it is to his advantage to sacrifice to the gods in the traditional manner, and the impious man thinks it is not to his advantage because it’s a waste of money, a pure loss, and therefore it won’t do. And of course if there is punishment, then it’s a different story. But this is then no longer pious but is a consideration of: he obeys only because of the punishment, not genuine piety. You wanted to say something?

**Student:** Isn’t it possible that a man could have that—well, it is possible that men have courage not because they are knowers? It says here, those who know how they must behave are just those who can, which implies that all those who know how they must behave are those who can behave that way. Which seems to, which—I’m not sure of what that means purely, but it would seem to mean that those who can and those who know are coterminous subjects.

**LS:** Ya, I think that he means, ya.

**Student:** But we’ve seen in other places, and perhaps in the Platonic Socrates indicating that somehow there are some who have a good nature and are capable of having things like courage, or a certain measure of courage without perfect knowledge to justify it. Somehow those people are worthy of a certain praise, a certain respect, and they have a certain place in the city.

**LS:** Ya, but what is stated here is something more limited. Can you do the right thing, whatever the right thing may be, without knowing the right thing?

**Student:** Isn’t it possible that you could have right opinion?

**LS:** No, he means here use in the wide sense, where the distinction between knowledge and opinion doesn’t come in. What is knowledge of the laws, for example? That’s opinion. That is not *epistēmē* or *edeinai*.

**Student:** I see, I see. So that therefore this would cover the other case, this would cover the case of men who had right opinion concerning—?

**LS:** Ya, ya. The distinction is not made here.

**Student:** Okay.

**LS:** This is much more provisional, what is said here.



**Student (probably Mr. Klein):** Can I say something? To the courageous are opposed not only the cowards but also madmen.

**LS:** Ya. Ya, sure. But they are dropped, ya, are dropped in the further discussion because they are uninteresting for this context. The madmen are by definition ignoramuses.

**Mr. Klein:** That's right, yes.

**LS:** Pardon?

**Mr. Klein:** Yeah. But they are usually called in this case irrational.

**LS:** . . . .

**Mr. Klein:** Yeah.

**LS:** Ya, ya, but here we have read another passage where madness, I think it was in <sup>9</sup>Book 3, chapter nine, madness was defined as a kind of ignorance. For example, the man who believes he is so tall that he cannot go through the door without hurting himself, being hurt by the ceiling—he is ignorant. He doesn't know that this does not happen to him. And similarly here in the case of the rational. So <sup>10</sup>that is the end, at least, of the dialectics discussion between Socrates and Euthydemus. But the chapter—yes?

**Mrs. Kaplan:** According to this, according to Xenophon's classification, Socrates' classification, wisdom is always wisdom. When he sees wisdom, this is a kind of kind, wisdom or beautiful. Now he adds usefulness, and you've just mentioned that wisdom not for everybody is useful. How then would you classify not-useful wisdom still as somehow you possessed wisdom? I mean, classification, as if classification lost its ground because it was divided according, wisdom, class, kind, beautiful kind, good kind. Now you add, he adds usefulness. You say . . . beautiful, but not useful in a way. Suppose if you—simple example, poetry, in what way the beautiful poetry is useful, or for whom it's useful.

**LS:** Ya, but well, that's easy to answer.

**Mrs. Kaplan:** Huh?

**LS:** It's easy to answer. It ennobles the hearer if it is poetry and not slime or gutter-slime. Then it would do that. But the point, however, is this, which you mean, the useful: When Socrates says the good is the useful, he means *all* good things, *all* good things, regardless of what they are, and at what time, and in which case, and so on. To that extent the whole class, the whole tribe, is covered by what he says about the good.

**Mrs. Kaplan:** Well, my difficulty is with wisdom. If you stated that a man is good, has wisdom, I cannot—how then you would classify [it]<sup>11</sup> as not a good? Wisdom is wisdom, and wisdom has to be good in a way. So somebody who possess wisdom, if it's somehow—

**LS:** Ya, sure. Ya, but it is not in all cases. You can say by right it is always useful, but not in fact. For example, in Socrates' case, according to Xenophon's and Plato's presentation, wisdom was always useful, including his dying. But if he had been taken prisoner when he was forty by some pirates who sold him to the Persian King, then it might have been, he might have led a rather miserable life.

**Mrs. Kaplan:** Then he was not wise at—

**LS:** Yes, he was wise, oh, yes. Then this—

**Mrs. Kaplan:** But . . . circumstances . . . .

**LS:** This is in the wake of the Augustinian or so notion, this for the classics, that's very clear. There is no simple recipe. There is something like happiness, but this happiness, this is not unexposed. There are all kinds of dangers lurking, and therefore, when Aristotle discusses it, [he] says, ya, there is something to what Solon said, that no one is to be praised [as] happy before his death, because all kinds of things may happen to him. And it is very well to say that only virtue, that virtue is the core of happiness, which is surely true, but there are some other little things, like health and so on, which are also necessary, according to the popular view, for happiness. Now when they all are missing—say, you have a man like Job—

**Student:** Like who?

**LS:** Like Job. Job, ya, Job. And he is a man of virtue, and yet his terrible misery: What will you do? Can you say with a good conscience he was happy in spite of the death of his children, the loss of his property, and so on? Or will you say he became simply unhappy because this happened? Aristotle uses the example of Priam, but that's the same question.

**Student:** What would you say?

**LS:** Pardon?

**Student:** What would you say?

**LS:** That it is wise not to decide it.

**Student:** It's wise not to make a—?

**LS:** Ya, to say—well, a Priam or a Job: that would be a bit harsh to say that they were happy in these conditions; but on the other hand, the core of their happiness, their virtue, was still shining through the ashes and with which they covered themselves. What more can you do?

**Student:** Well, if someone were to ask with respect to the highest kind of happiness was Job happy, it would seem that that question would either demand an absolute answer one way or the other or a simple refusal to talk about it.

**LS:** Ya, but perhaps in this world of coming into being and decay, these absolute answers are not possible.

**Student:** But if this world is not—

**LS:** Pardon?

**Student:** If this cosmos—

**LS:** Ya, well, as soon as we know that, we will take it up.

**Student:** Will we ever know it?

**LS:** Well, let's see, that is a long question. But Xenophon doesn't speak about these matters; <sup>12</sup>in Xenophon only Cyrus, not Socrates, speaks about the immortality of the soul. And therefore we must respect him to the extent to which we are still trying to learn from him. Is this a fair proposition?

**Student:** Yes.

**LS:** Good. So Xenophon has now finished his account of Socrates as a man who makes his companions more dialectical. The rest of the chapter, paragraphs 12 to 15, are not necessarily things which Socrates said to Euthydemus. <sup>13</sup>His name does not occur anymore.

**Student:** Can I—?

**LS:** Pardon?

**Student:** Just, can I ask a question? Does anything preclude that the particular examples of the kinds that are raised here, which are all virtues, are not raised from an *ad hominem* point of view? Well, you stated earlier that we had to read everything as it was being said to Euthydemus. Is it not possible then that Socrates did not think that things like piety, wisdom, [and] so on were <sup>14</sup>analyzable to kinds, were analyzable, were subject to—?

**LS:** Ya, but—sure, I have no doubt. The mere fact that these were conversations *pros Euthydēmon*, as the Greek says, with a view to Euthydemus, implies that there is a discussion of them which does not have this *relative* character, relative to Euthydemus or Hippias or whoever he may be. But Xenophon simply does not give us such conversation, as little as Plato does. We have to figure that out.

**Student:** Right, I meant even more than simply the discussion of these virtues but of virtue, of the virtues themselves. Whether they might not ultimately not be—well, there's no way of telling from the text whether Socrates really thought that one could give a *ti esti* answer to the question of any of the virtues, if that's the case.

**LS:** Ya, but he never ceased considering them. That is what Xenophon clearly says. And he gives a long enumeration in the first chapter of the book of such questions. And this is a—<sup>15</sup>it's a deliberately incomplete list. It goes much on beyond that. So shall we now read paragraph 12?

**Reader:** “Kingship and despotism, in his judgment, were both forms of government, but he held that they differed. For government of men with their consent and in accordance with the laws of the state was kingship; while government of unwilling subjects and not controlled by laws, but imposed by the will of the ruler, was despotism.”

**LS:** Tyranny.

**Reader:** Tyranny. “And where the officials are chosen among those who fulfil the requirements of the laws, the constitution is an aristocracy; where rateable property is the qualification for office, you have a plutocracy: where all are eligible, a democracy.” (IV.6.12)

**LS:** Ya. Now this is what Socrates believed or held—*hēgeito* or *enomize*. It's not said that he *said* this. He said it, of course; otherwise one couldn't know it, but here we have more than what he merely said. Now we had already a discussion of the regimes, the various regimes, in Book 3, chapter nine, but there it was said the only title to rule is knowledge, and no reference whatever to laws. Here laws are crucial for the definition of kingship. Two criteria: the subject must be willing to obey; and second, the rule must be according to the laws of the city. The two things are not necessarily—they are separable from one another. The subject may be willing, but it may not be rule according to the laws of the city; and also the other way around: it may be rule according to the laws of the city but the subject may be unwilling—you know, a rebellious citizenry. So only if the two things come together is it a kingship, and if both things are absent, it is tyranny.

Now there is something else. First he makes the distinction between kingship and tyranny, and then he speaks of three other regimes: aristocracy, plutocracy, and democracy. And the relation between these two things, kingship, tyranny, on the one hand, and these three other things, other regimes, on the other, is not clear. Perhaps this alternative, kingly or tyrannical, applies to all regimes, and so <sup>16</sup>it is easy to see that you could have a tyrannical plutocracy, a tyrannical democracy, and then also a *regal* plutocracy and a *regal* democracy. The case of aristocracy is different: there it would seem to be unthinkable that this should be tyrannical. But again, one must wonder: May not the best men ruling with great intelligence and with the best of intentions, rule against the will of the subjects? Then there would be something tyrannical in their rule, according to the definition given here. The expression which he uses here: where the ruling officers are established from among those who *fulfill the laws*—<sup>17</sup>I understand this to mean: who complete the laws. Who complete them. And just as the equitable man completes the law, what the legislator has been unable to complete because of the essential limitations of all laws, the equitable man, the equitable judge does when he knows the circumstances. I have no proof of that, but this seems to be, because if it would mean only obeying or fulfilling the laws, then one would expect the same would apply also to the two other regimes mentioned here. Well, now let us then read the final discussion.

**Reader:** Whenever anyone argued with him on any point without being able to make himself clear, asserting but not proving, that so and so was wiser or an abler politician or braver or what not, he would lead the whole discussion back to the definition required, much in this way:

**LS:** Ya, to the assumption, the *hypothesis*.

**Reader:**

“Do you say that your man is a better citizen than mine?”

“I do indeed.”

“Then why didn't we first consider what is the function of a good citizen?”

“Let us do so.”

“In financial administration, then, is not the better man he who makes the city wealthier?”

“Certainly.”

“And in war he who makes her stronger than her rivals?”

“Of course.”

“And on an embassy he who turns enemies into friends?”

“Presumably.”

“And in debate he who puts down strife and produces harmony?”

“I think so.”

By this process of leading back the argument even his adversary came to see the truth clearly. Whenever he himself argued out a question, he advanced by steps that gained general assent, holding this to be the only sure method. (IV.6.14-15)

**LS:** The only safety of speech, ya?

**Reader:** “Accordingly, whenever he argued, he gained a greater measure of assent from his hearers than any man I have known. He said that Homer gave Odysseus the credit of being ‘a safe speaker’<sup>i</sup> because he had a way of leading the discussion from one acknowledged truth to another.” (IV.615)

**LS:** I believe that Xenophon speaks here of two *kinds* of dialectics, and I think in Marchant's translation and in other translations it doesn't come out. The first is the one which he used when discussing something with contradictors, and in that case, Socrates led back <sup>18</sup>the discussion to the underlying assumption, and proceeding in this way the truth became manifest to the very contradictors. *But* when Socrates on his own initiative went through something by speech, then he marched through the things most commonly agreed upon, thinking that this constitutes the safety of speech. In other words, in the first case of dialectics, the aim is the truth. In the second case, the aim is agreement. Now these are two different goals, and agreement, one could say, of right, agreement should be possible only in the truth. But that is not a practical proposition because we all are guided primarily by opinions, and agreement is possible, therefore, rather on the basis of the things on which men of a given society agree. That he mentions Odysseus here should not be altogether surprising. In the defense of Socrates, in the first two chapters of the *Memorabilia* Xenophon quotes the accuser, who had said that Socrates frequently quoted certain verses from the *Iliad*. Now in these verses, Odysseus is presented as speaking in one manner to

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<sup>i</sup> *Odyssey*, VIII. 171.

men of mark and in another manner to the common people—two ways of speaking, that was Odysseus' safety of speech, that he knew how to speak to different kinds of people, and he could get the greatest possible agreement. We should perhaps read—<sup>19</sup>in the more modern edition, there is the *Banquet*, is there not? There is a passage which is a beautiful illustration. Chapter four, paragraph[s] 56-59.

**Student:** Excuse me, from what?

**LS:** *Symposium*, Xenophon's *Symposium*. Chapter four, paragraph 56 to 59.

**Reader:**

"Good!" said Callias. "And now, Socrates, what can you advance in support of your pride in that disreputable profession that you mentioned?"

**LS:** Socrates claimed to possess the art of a procurer. Ya.

**Reader:**

"Let us first," said he, "come to an understanding on the functions that belong to the procurer. Do not hesitate to answer all the questions I ask you, so that we may know our points of agreement. Is that your pleasure?" he asked.

"Certainly," was the reply—

**LS:** *Pany men oun*, ya, for those who know Greek.

**Reader:**

and when they had once started with "certainly," that was the regular answer they all made to his questions thereafter. (*Symposium*, 4.56)

**LS:** Ya.

**Reader:**

*Socrates:* "Well, then, you consider it the function of a good procurer is to render the man or the woman whom he is serving attractive to his or her associates?"

*All:* "Certainly." [Laughter]

*Socrates:* "Now, one thing that contributes to rendering a person attractive is a comely arrangement of hair and clothing, is it not?"

*All:* "Certainly." [Laughter]

"This, also, we know, do we not, that it is in a man's power to use the one pair of eyes to express both friendship and hostility?"

"Certainly."

"And again, it is possible to speak both modestly and boldly with the same voice?"

"Certainly."

"Moreover, are there not words that create ill feeling and others that conduce to friendliness?"

"Certainly."

“Now the good procurer would teach only the words that tend to make one attractive, would he not?”

“Certainly.”

“Which one would be the better?” he continued, “the one who could make people attractive to a single person or the one who could make them attractive to many?”

This question brought a division; some said, “Clearly the one who could make them attractive to a great many”; the others merely repeated, “Certainly.” [Much laughter] (*Symposium*, 4.57-59)

**LS:** Ya, here you see, they are the clever ones. They don’t want to bring out their unpopular alternative. And what does Socrates say?

**Reader:** “Remarking that they were all of one mind on this point as on the others, he went on: ‘If a person—’” (*Symposium*, 4.60)

**LS:** And so on and so on. So Socrates acts in the same spirit. He buries the opposition in silence, and so he brings about agreement too. But we see that this agreement is not 100 percent agreement. Ya. And by the way, I saw that modern commentators say that this little piece is—in this, Xenophon is poking fun at Plato because [in] the Platonic dialogues this expression—*pány men oun, pany men oun*—occurs so frequently, which I regard as preposterous. But that is probably now the received view.

**Student:** Mr. Strauss, did you say that the conversations that Socrates engaged in voluntarily were the ones in which he employed this method?

**LS:** Which method?

**Student:** This method of simply reducing the opposition to the rhythmic chanting of the word “certainty.”

**LS:** It is a bit more—no, I think, why? Because he could engage voluntarily in discussion with someone, a very likeable young man who was still very unprepared, who was not yet capable to be a contradictor, in Xenophon’s words . . . . And then he would—

**Student:** Ah, I see, so the involuntarily discussions would be the discussion—

**LS:** No, it’s not so simple. I mean, it could be—one would have to draw up a scheme. It could be a voluntary and involuntary discussions with contradictors on the one hand, and with non-contradictors on the other.

**Student:** So there’d be four kinds?

**LS:** Ya, ya.

**Student:** Then the kind that would produce, any kind would produce knowledge, and some would say that knowledge is not part of this dialectic. But if any kind would approach knowledge, it would be the kind with worthy contradictors.

**LS:** Yes. Ya, but <sup>20</sup>does this then not become trivial, that Socrates voluntarily entered into conversations with worthy contradictors? Does it not go without saying?

**Student:** That he voluntarily entered into?

**LS:** Ya. I mean, it is so, but it is trivial, is it not?

**Student:** Well, if we could—yeah, it seems that it would be necessary to say that he did voluntarily do that, but that the majority of his conversations, at least the ones that we see, are not of that kind. The worthy contradictors, perhaps Apollodorus, or perhaps—

**LS:** Apollodorus? No. Of all people.

**Student:** The worthy, who is the mathematician that refuses to—?

**LS:** Theodorus?

**Student:** Theodorus, and the other, there's another—

**LS:** Theaetetus?

**Student:** Theaetetus will talk to Socrates, but he's not the worthy contradictor, there's another—

**LS:** Ya, but that is a long question. I mean, one can simplify the issue in this way, from a . . . . Look at the outside. There are some people who seem to be Socrates' equals.

**Student:** And they won't talk to him.

**LS:** Ya, the Eleatic Stranger and—

**Student:** Yeah.

**LS:** Or the—ya, but there is no conversation between them.

**Student:** No.

**LS:** Plato in his wisdom did not wish to do that.

**Student:** But that would be the conversation that would truly indicate, that would, within those conversations there would be some progress toward knowledge. Maybe it would be wrong to write it down—



**LS:** Well, there would also be—it, that there could also be some progress in knowledge when Socrates talks to a man inferior to him. There can still be progress not only in our knowledge but maybe his own knowledge, that observing a certain difficulty which the young man experiences, Socrates himself learns something. That cannot be excluded.

**Student:** But that would be something that would be beyond anything that the young man would understand.

**LS:** Ya, all right. Surely in the way in which Socrates understands it. Yes.

**Student:** Socrates would see the underlying argument that the young man would just be presenting the reflection of. It seems that there must be something unwise about writing down the greatest conversation, the conversation that would truly—

**LS:** Yes, say, a conversation between Plato and Aristotle, for example.

**Student:** Or between Socrates and—

**LS:** And Plato, ya.

**Student:** Or Plato, yeah.

**LS:** Ya, that's why Xenophon didn't write it, it seems here. He prepared it but didn't write it. You remember that? He built it up in such a way that we expected that—

**Student:** Ah, yeah, yeah, and then it didn't come and then it went down the other side—

**LS:** Ya. One reason surely is that Xenophon did not wish to make a fool of himself.

**Student:** Why is it necessarily—well, intuitively I think I understand; but it, I would—but I'm not sure that I understand by reason alone why it is that such a conversation should not be written. There seems to be something about writing such a conversation which is bad, but I can't quite determine—

**LS:** Ya, could it not simply be beyond almost all men's power to write it?

**Student:** You mean it would be hubris to attempt?

**LS:** No, I mean—ya, but hubris which is so severely punished in the execution because a man makes himself ridiculous.

**Student:** All right.

**LS:** Ya?

**Student:** Yeah, I can see that.

**LS:** So one, I think the word hubris is too harsh a term for that. Do you know the Jewish term chutzpah?

**Student:** Yeah.

**LS:** That would be a better word for that. [Laughter]

**Student (probably Mr. Klein):** Can I ask you: How do you understand, paragraph 12, that the fact that wealth is inserted here . . . .

**LS:** Is inserted . . . . because I think that is [that] first the virtues, and then ruling, *archêin*, are the great themes of Socrates.

**Student:** I didn't—if you could—?

**LS:** [Louder] The virtues and ruling—*archein*—are *the* two great themes of Socrates.

**Student:** Yes.

**LS:** And therefore it is proper to give also Socrates' final view, as it were, on ruling after we have heard his final view presented with a view to Euthydemus regarding the virtues. And I believe the function of this paragraph 12 is to show that here we have a statement which is final<sup>21</sup> and does not need a new translation, as the preceding discussions need, and therefore it makes perfect sense that then the general remark about the two kinds of dialectics follows. Let us say the previous discussions with Euthydemus in this chapter, that would be the dialectics of the non-contradictors. This would stand up, in Xenophon's view at any rate, against the contradictors. What he says about kingship, tyranny, and so on—

[break in tape]

**Student:** —I'd have to think about that. I'm not, not quite clear about that.

**LS:** Good. And I hope you will let us know the results of your thinking about that, good. Shall we then read a bit more, and perhaps, if possible, we should finish that today, but we shouldn't rush. We'll begin with chapter seven, please.

**Reader:** "I think that I have said enough to show that Socrates stated his own opinion plainly to those who consorted with him: I will now show that he also took pains to make them independent in doing the work that they were fitted for." (IV.7.1)

**LS:** Now what does this mean? You'll remember there was a plan at the beginning of chapter<sup>22</sup> three, that he made them more able, more skilled in acting, more skilled in speaking, and more skilled in devising or contriving. Now chapter five dealt with skill in acting. You<sup>23</sup> must be continent in order to be good at acting. Chapter six, skill in speaking, i.e., skill in conversing. And now I believe he's now speaking about the skill in devising or contriving, but this is not

discussed in the form, in a dialogical form, for reasons which may become clear. Now the beginning is a kind of summary of the preceding remarks. Socrates revealed his view—“his” underlined, *simply*— *haplōs*—with the view to those who associated with him. And that is of course the absolute truth. He revealed his views simply, straightforwardly, with a view to the individual whom he taught. And therefore it means Socrates revealed his own view two-foldly, ya? Using twofold for all other, all numbers. Ya. Yes?

**Reader:** “For I never knew a man who was so careful to discover what each of his companions knew. Whatever it befits a gentleman to know he taught most zealously, so far as his own knowledge extended; if he was not entirely familiar with a subject, he took them to those who knew. He also taught them how far a well-educated man should make himself familiar with any given subject.” (IV.7.1-2)

**LS:** So one <sup>24</sup>could perhaps expect Xenophon to talk now about how Socrates guided these young gentlemen toward the art of generalship, or to the art of hunting, or to any other gentlemanly pursuit. But nothing of the kind. What does he say instead?

**Reader:** “For instance, he said that the study of geometry should be pursued until the student was competent to measure a parcel of land accurately in case he wanted to take over, convey or divide it, or to compute the yield; and this knowledge was so easy to acquire, that anyone who gave his mind to mensuration knew the size of the piece and carried away a knowledge of the principles of land measurement. He was against carrying the study of geometry so far as to include the more complicated figures, on the ground that he could not see the use of them. Not that he was himself unfamiliar with them—” (IV.7.2-3)

**LS:** Ya, you see here he wasn’t, so he did not teach certain things which he knew. So Socrates did not *simply* set forth what he knew. Some things he kept back. Like the higher branches of geometry. Ya?

**Reader:**

but he said that they were enough to occupy a lifetime, to the complete exclusion of many other useful studies. Similarly he recommended them to make themselves familiar with astronomy, but only so far as to be able to find the time of night, month and year, in order to use reliable evidence when planning a journey by land or sea, or setting the watch, and in all other affairs that are done in the night or month or year, by distinguishing the times and seasons aforesaid. This knowledge, again, was so easily to be had from night hunters and pilots and others who made it their business to know such things. But he strongly deprecated studying astronomy so far as to include the knowledge of bodies revolving in different courses, and of planets and comets, and wearing oneself out with the calculation of their distance from the earth, their periods of revolution and the causes of these. Of such researches, again he said that he could not see what useful purpose they served. He had indeed attended lectures on these subjects too— (IV.7.3-5)

**LS:** Ya, you see again. So he knew it, but he didn’t teach it. Ya.

**Reader:** “but these again, he said, were enough to occupy a lifetime to the complete exclusion of many useful studies.

In general, with regard to the phenomena of the heavens, he deprecated curiosity to learn how the deity contrives them—”

**LS:** Ya, here’s the word *contriving*. Ya, so human contriving is not helped by knowing how the god contrives every phenomenon. So <sup>25</sup>the point which he makes here now is this: in the case of geometry it’s only a waste of time, but in the case of astronomy it is in addition impious, as appears from the sequel.

**Reader:**

he held that their secrets could not be discovered by man, and believed that any attempt to search out what the gods had not chosen to reveal must be displeasing to them. He said that he who meddles with these matters runs the risk of losing his sanity as completely as Anaxagoras, who took an insane pride in his explanation of the divine machinery. For that sage, in declaring the sun to be fire, ignored the facts than—that, I suppose—men can look at fire without inconvenience, but cannot gaze steadily at the sun; that their skin is blackened by the sun’s rays, but not by fire. Furthermore, he ignored the fact that sunlight is essential to the health of all vegetation, whereas if anything is heated by fire it withers. Again, when he pronounced the sun to be a red-hot stone, he ignored the fact that a stone in fire neither glows nor can resist it long, whereas the sun shines with unequalled brilliance forever.

He also recommended the study of arithmetic. But in this case as in the others he recommended avoidance of vain application; and invariably, whether theories or ascertained facts formed the subject of his conversation, he limited it to what was useful. (IV.7.5-8)

**LS:** But up to the useful he considered himself <sup>26</sup>and he went through it together with the companions. So here there is a common study of the useful parts. The things which are no longer useful are no longer the subject of common study.

**Student:** Does that—

**LS:** Pardon?

**Student:** Does that mean that he might study with the companions why a man . . . would wish to restrict his intake of food if he were a jockey for the sake of the goal to win the race?

**LS:** But we come to the question of <sup>27</sup>health immediately. Health is a special thing.

**Student:** I was thinking here, for example, what was used in the accounts of a man who would do a thing, a moderate thing, but not for the purpose of moderation itself, as opposed to a man who might spend his time justifying doing the same thing for a reason that would have no usefulness but would, which would, which would entail *theoria* purely. That is—

**LS:** Ya, but here you see that according to this official doctrine of Socrates, pure, *purposeless* “theoria” is out, because it’s a waste of time. You can do much more useful things.

**Student:** Yeah, but these are the things, the purposeless *theoria* is something that he doesn't speak about with his companion, but we've seen before that he doesn't speak about everything with his companions.

**LS:** Companions, *synontes*, is an ambiguous term. There are all kinds of people who are companions, ya?

**Student:** Is it possible that Socrates, when he's alone, in private, not speaking to anyone, considers this purposelessness *theoria*?

**LS:** Ya, he must have learned at sometime something.

**Student:** Right, and doesn't write about it—?

**LS:** I mean, either he had an awful past, more or less of the kind which Aristophanes ascribes to him, you know—where he worried about things about which one shouldn't worry, then this would also be bad. Or in the other case, he continued this practice throughout his life.

**Student:** But he didn't write about it. He didn't talk about it.

**LS:** No, he didn't write. Only "I" and "J," you remember? [Laughter]

**Student:** He he didn't even talk about it to people.

**LS:** Ya, not to people in general, no. And that was made quite clear when Xenophon, when he talked about the virtues and, and—

**Student:** He, in terms of their usefulness.

**LS:** Pardon?

**Student:** It's always the useful.

**LS:** Ya, it's useful, the virtues are useful. They are useful to the city and they are useful to the individual. [They] are useful. Yes?

**Reader:**

He also strongly urged his companions to take care of their health. "You should find out all you can," he said, "from those who know. Everyone should watch himself throughout his life, and notice what sort of meat and drink and what form of exercise suit his constitution, and how he should regulate them in order to enjoy good health. For by such attention to yourselves you can discover better than any doctor what suits your constitution." (IV.7.9)

**LS:** Ya. So that is much more important than the higher branches of geometry, ya, and astronomy. Yes. Here he speaks of Anaxagoras, as you have seen, and—but he doesn't go into

the question <sup>28</sup>to which he alludes, that Anaxagoras denied that the sun is a god; it is simply, it is only a fiery stone. You remember that perhaps from Plato's *Apology*, where this question comes up. Socrates has an allusion to that here in an earlier discussion, when he spoke of the sun in the third chapter. Yes?

**Student:** Yeah, I wonder if this—well, if that ties in with the fact that in each of the places where he indicates in what way Socrates is experienced with these higher things that he doesn't know, or, well, in different fields, namely geometry. It says he was not inexperienced with them. In the arithmetic he studied together, but in the astronomy it appears that it was not the case that he was not a hearer. So, indicating there—

**LS:** That was the same expression, I think, which he used in the case of geometry.

**Student:** No—

**LS:** Oh, no, no, he says *apeiros*, ya, I'm sorry.

**Student:** Yeah, indicating that what he did know of these things he was merely passive, as far as the astronomy was concerned, whereas the others, it was a more active.

**LS:** Ya, ya, because it is a terrible thing, the astronomy.

**Student:** I mean, yeah, I mean, it's rather striking that even the hint is, or this hinting—

**LS:** Ya, ya. Sure. And I think it is no accident that the book practically ends with the same subject with which it begins: that Socrates had nothing to do with these studies of the devices or contrivances by which the thunders, lightnings and such things are brought about. But Socrates has of course—all super-human knowledge, super-human in the simple sense, beyond the horizon of ordinary men, is discouraged . . . But still, sometime one needs it, and that is said in the next last paragraph.

**Reader:** “When anyone was in need of help that human wisdom was unable to give he advised him to resort to divination; for he who knew the means whereby the gods give guidance to men concerning their affairs never lacked divine counsel.” (IV.7.10)

**LS:** Ya. So that is a subject which we've known from the very beginning, and he ends where he began. He does not speak of his *daimonion* because he would never obtrude it. Only when it is necessary will he speak of it, and then this gives occasion to Xenophon to introduce a concluding consideration, in the next chapter.

**Reader:**

As for his claim that he was forewarned by “the deity” what he ought to do and what not to do, some may think that it must have been a delusion because he was condemned to death. But they should remember two facts. First, he had already reached such an age, that had he not died then, death must have come to him soon after. Secondly, he escaped the most irksome stage of life and the inevitable diminution of mental powers, and

instead won glory by the moral strength revealed in the wonderful honesty and frankness and probity of his defence, and in the equanimity and manliness with which he bore the sentence of death.

In fact it is admitted that there is no record of any death more nobly borne. For he was forced to live for thirty days after the verdict was given, because it was the month of the Dêlia,<sup>ii</sup> and the law did not allow any public sacrifice to take place until the sacred embassy had returned from Delos. (IV.8.1-2)

**LS:** That's a public sacrifice?

**Mr. Williamson:** Sacred embassy, I'm sorry.

**LS:** No—

**Student:** It says execution.

**LS:** Execution.

**Reader (Mr. Williamson):** Did I say sacrifice?

**Student:** You slipped.

**Reader (Mr. Williamson):** I'm sorry.

**Student:** Mr. Strauss, what was the Greek word for moral?

**LS:** For what?

**Student:** For moral, on the previous page.

**LS:** Moral?

**Student:** Yes.

**LS:** Where was moral?

**Mr. Klein:** "Moral strength."

**LS:** Pardon?

**Mr. Klein:** The translation has "moral strength."

**Reader (Mr. Williamson):** Where's this? What paragraph?

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<sup>ii</sup> See Plato, *Phaedo* 58 b. The festival was held in the month Thargelion, our May.

**Mr. Klein:** End of paragraph one.

**Mr. Williamson:** Chapter two. Oh, I see.

**LS:** I do not, which one—

**Student:** Page 68 . . . .

**LS:** Oh, that's the strength of the soul, ya? The strength of the soul. Good. Ya?

**Reader:** "During this interval, as all his intimate acquaintances could see, he continued to live exactly as before; and, in truth, before that time he had been admired above all men for his cheerfulness and serenity. How, then, could man die more nobly? Or what death could be nobler than the death most nobly faced? What death more blessed than the noblest? Or what dearer to the gods than the most blessed?" (IV.8.2-3)

**LS:** Ya, so <sup>29</sup>Socrates died the most noble death, and the proper posture toward dying is called courage or manliness, and that would seem to mean that Socrates was a man of outstanding courage and manliness. But now Xenophon begins to give a report about what happened in the last time of Socrates' life.

**Student:** Mr. Strauss, this is paragraph eight . . . and the reception of Xenophon . . . .

**LS:** In paragraph eight?

**Student:** Ya, in this paragraph we have, this chapter eight . . . .

**LS:** Eight. Let me see. Paragraph—oh, I see, ya, sure, in the beginning.

**Student:** . . . what he ought to do and what—

**LS:** He ought not to do, sure.

**Student:** But in Plato, you know—

**LS:** I know, ya. That is one of the famous differences between Plato and Xenophon.

**Student:** Yeah, what is the meaning, the difference?

**LS:** Ya, but I think it is not so *clear* cut. For example, in the case in Plato, in the *Euthydemus*, there Socrates was to *leave* and go home. He is already sitting in the dressing room and making himself ready for leaving, and then the *daimonion* happened to him, and then he said—then he stayed, of course, because that meant he shouldn't go. But at the same time, this made it possible for Socrates to have this interesting conversation which follows. So the same *damonion* which



forbade him to leave commanded him to stay, and perhaps this is true of all cases, all these prohibitions are also from the other point of view positive commands.

**Student:** The difference is—I mean, isn't there a difference between the existence of positive law, which implies the existence of a principle of positive law, versus simple negation of whatever is there, whatever system is active, simple negation of parts of that system, which would never constitute principles but would simply be given at various moments within the functioning of that system?

**LS:** Ya, but I suppose they must make sense in spite of their fragmentary character.

**Student:** Be consistent with each other?

**LS:** Ya, somehow, or at any rate they must make some sense, otherwise it would be sheer folly.

**Student:** But would they have to be based on any principles the way—if the *daimonion* acted in a positive sense then it, then the very fact that it was a positive sense would imply that at *least* with respect to those . . . there was a principle.

**LS:** No. No, Socrates—in the *Banquet*, Antisthenes, a well-known companion of Socrates, whom we have met here, says to Socrates that Socrates tries to avoid him. Antisthenes is in love with Socrates, Socrates tries to avoid him and sometimes, he says, Socrates uses the pretense of his *daimonion*. Ya? So Socrates says, in other words, to Antisthenes: I would be delighted to be together with you, but my *daimonion* forbids it. Now he would not have referred to the *daimonion* if he would have liked to be together with him on that occasion, ya? So he needed the negative *daimonion* very urgently, and he did not need a positive *daimonion*. This doesn't make sense?

**Student:** Yeah.

**LS:** I mean, for example, if he would—he doesn't hurt people in any way if he says: Come in, let us have a talk. But if he says: No, you can't come in, he's likely to hurt people and he must give some respectable reason, and which reason could be more respectable than the *daimonion*?

**Student:** But the *daimonion* is in a sense useful only because it does not necessarily follow a principle, but it can be applied when it's needed.

**LS:** Ya, but still, would there not be a principle there in all these actions—

**Student:** Maybe not.

**LS:** To defend Socrates?

**Student:** Maybe not. There could be actions that could be fragmentary, as long as there's—

**LS:** All right.

**Student:** As long there's no positive law, there is always the possibility . . . .

**LS:** But do they not have the function of defending Socrates?

**Student:** Ah, ah, that would be the principle.

**LS:** Ya.

**Student:** Ok, sure.

**LS:** And I believe that is proven by Plato's *Apology*. The Delphic oracle drives him on to go in the marketplace and have all these things, and he becomes hated and eventually becomes condemned.

**Student:** Because of the positive.

**LS:** Because of the Delphic oracle.

**Student:** Which is a positive—

**LS:** Well, the Delphic oracle told him to “do that.” And then he is asked: Why didn't you go into politics? And then Socrates says, slightly contradicting the other: Ya, that I couldn't do, because then I would have perished a long time ago. And then he refers to the *daimonion*, which obstructed his going into politics. That, I think, fits very well together.

Where are we now? Do we have the time, or shall we wait . . . . I think we'll wait because we would rush and that is of no use. Is there—perhaps you have some points which you would like to raise?

**Student:** In the context of the discussion of the good that takes place . . . in this book, is there anything indicating whether happiness is a good?

**LS:** Is there anything said—?

**Student:** To indicate that happiness is a good.

**LS:** That was discussed, don't you remember?, <sup>30</sup>where Euthydemus says, <sup>31</sup>[forced] into a corner: I'm afraid the only good thing which will remain is happiness. And then Socrates says: Yes, if, that's all right, if you do not add to it disputable goods, problematic goods—and Euthydemus doesn't know what he means—<sup>32</sup>such as health, harmony, wealth, and so on. And so then <sup>33</sup>what he said, *eudaimonia*, which is immune to these other things—and I suppose it would be what Socrates calls in the *Memorabilia*, elsewhere in the *Memorabilia*, *eupraxia*, doing well. Doing well, in contradistinction to *eutuchia*, being lucky, being habitually lucky.

**Student:** But—

**LS:** Ya, but even that, doing well, would I suppose mean in the highest case doing well in one's thinking. And that would be wise. That can also have its undesirable side effects. I mean not only because of the Persian King but, well, maybe other reasons. Some people get disturbed and get useless for things for which they should really do by trying to think about such matters. There is no simple—I mean, what Socrates says, [that] wisdom is the greatest good and there is no good which is not sometimes bad for someone: these two things go together perfectly. We only believe that if something is unqualifiedly good, it must be good under all conditions and circumstances.

**Student:** [entire question slightly inaudible] Still, what makes a thing a good and not good at another time, something that's good at one time and not good at another time, doesn't there still have to be something which unifies all the experiences that can be described as good?

**LS:** Ya, sure.

**Student:** That's not simply variable. What would that be?

**LS:** Well, Socrates gave a very general answer to that question, as we have seen: "*to ophelimon*." There, and I suppose he could have said more about it if he wanted, what is helpful to the soul rather than to the body, ya?, and to the reasoning part of the soul rather than to the lower part of the soul, and so on. That is what is developed in Plato, but I don't believe that this is alien to the Xenophontic Socrates.

**Student (Mrs. Kaplan):** If this were clearer, for . . . if we say kind: wisdom, now divide: useful, not-useful. What is the difference between wisdom which is useful and wisdom which is not useful? You see, no good term . . . because usefulness is not a Greek virtue. It is circumstances.

**LS:** Ya, sure. But he has in mind the circumstances.

**Mrs. Kaplan:** Yeah, I understand. But now, turning to the theoretical part . . . we say: What is that? Is always the same. It is a kind. The same with wool . . . the same with beautiful. Now we divide: wisdom, useful and not useful. What is the difference then, if when our division goes this way between this wisdom which is in the category useful, and wisdom which is in the category not, is not useful.

**LS:** Ya, but this is—

**Mrs. Kaplan:** The same with wool, the same way beautiful, the same with all virtues which we can divide?

**LS:** The difficulty is created by the fact that there are not two wisdoms but one wisdom which is always the best but not always useful to the individual.

**Mrs. Kaplan:** What changed, then, in the wisdom as such which makes in one case wisdom useful or good, goodness, good and in another, not? This is the question which I am not probably wrong in some . . .

**LS:** But does it not agree with the experience?

**Mrs. Kaplan:** [slightly inaudible] Experience, not experience in the question of turning from knowledge is not in the—better to say this way: in classification experience helps to classify, but that should not change the classification. I think about *Sophist*, and how Plato . . . suddenly discovered his own mistakes. . . . What were the mistakes? Not keeping the principle. Now if wisdom is always wisdom, we divide into the useful and not useful, this I take the division. I only ask: What is the difference in that wisdom which is useful and that which is not useful?

**LS:** Ya, look, think of such an example: if it is assumed that a man of Socrates' gifts had appeared in Sparta.

**Mrs. Kaplan:** Where?

**LS:** In *Sparta*. [If] Socrates appeared in Sparta, what would have happened? What would have happened? I mean, that would have led to a conflict with the whole city at a very early age, and he would not have had any support by any other people, because there would have been no—there was no basis for that. So the different cities, the different *poleis*, can make all the difference. A man living now in Soviet Russia, concerned with the truth, and the same man living in the West. Is there not something—would this man in Russia not be better off, in the crude sense of being better off, if he had no such concern and <sup>34</sup>would swallow everything which is dished out by the propaganda?

**Mrs. Kaplan:** Well, yes. But then would not—if you would be content with this kind of city, then Plato the critic is of no use, no use whatever. His theory of ideas was of no use whatever. First of all, his own disciples didn't understand that very well . . . .

**LS:** Ya, but—

**Mrs. Kaplan:** And the—

**LS:** But he does the same thing, he speaks of the kinds or tribes. He doesn't elaborate it as much as Plato does, but it seems to be the same thing which he has in mind.

**Student:** Yeah, but Mr. Strauss, isn't there an analogy with regards to nature? Fire is very good, it warms. *Fire* is very good in nature, you know, it burns. But when fire burns the wood, I forget how Plato calls it, I think he calls it the . . . because it's a straight course, that is to say that fire could burn the—in terms of the wood, it's no good. It has another side to it, an un-useful . . . side to it. Maybe the analogy here is to human affairs, the wisdom comes to a . . . .

**LS:** And yes, and that is perhaps not a sufficient analysis of wisdom, but it is surely something which has a certain massive truth which one must not forget. Otherwise one will be in rebellion to relatively minor evils, you know? I mean, I do not wish to express myself more clearly. I think you all know what I'm thinking about.

**Student:** Mrs. Kaplan, wisdom doesn't change. There are not two kinds. It doesn't change. So whether it is useful or not doesn't depend on wisdom.

**LS:** Ya, ya.

**Mrs. Kaplan:** But how can you classify?

**Student:** But it does not, it does not. Wisdom's always the same.

**Student:** But the parts of, in human hands . . .

**Student:** Well, as Mr. Strauss says, certain circumstances lead, make wisdom dangerous. All right, but that doesn't change the wisdom.

**LS:** And does not make wisdom something ignoble or something.

**Mrs. Kaplan:** Yes, I understand this, I understand what this usefulness is in circumstances. But—

**LS:** Ya, useful. Usefulness—ya, but still, what is useful, there is another stratum. What is useful in a fundamental and permanent way for man has something to do with the constitution of man, <sup>35</sup>and this constitution has various strata, and therefore what is useful to the best or highest stratum is more emphatically useful than what is useful only to one's toes.

**Mrs. Kaplan:** Yes, I—but the un-usefulness of wisdom, that is surely shadow of wisdom—?

**LS:** Why should be wisdom be used—?

**Mrs. Kaplan:** How does the classification work? I have . . . about the important part of this classification. You see, you cannot classify wisdom as useful and not useful. This is—

**LS:** Ya, unfortunately you can make such a distinction.

**Mrs. Kaplan:** Then you are obliged—I mean, anyone who does this classification [is] obliged to see the difference in wisdom itself.

**LS:** Not in wisdom. Not, but in the possessors of wisdom.

**Mrs. Kaplan:** That you don't classify wisdom as such [slightly laughing], if you classify wisdom, and that is the practical application of wisdom goes this way. That in one, in some cases, wisdom would be not useful, but the same wisdom in other cases would be wisdom, would be useful.

**LS:** If men lived in the best possible or imaginable circumstances, wisdom would *always* be useful to the wise and then relatively to the unwise, but since the circumstances are unfortunately most of the time not the best imaginable ones, they're obviously . . . We can perhaps continue it

next time. And I propose—for some of you this will cause no difficulty—that we read the end of the *Memorabilia*, the eighth chapter, and we look at Xenophon’s *Apology of Socrates*, because the eighth chapter and the *Apology of Socrates* overlap largely, and there are nice differences between the two which are worth considering. You don’t have, you have only the old edition—

**Reader (Mr. Williamson):** No, I can bring the other volume—

[end of tape]

[There was presumably another session. The audio file, if one was made, has not survived.]

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<sup>1</sup> Deleted “in the next chapter”

<sup>2</sup> Deleted “it is”

<sup>3</sup> Deleted “said”

<sup>4</sup> Deleted “it”

<sup>5</sup> Deleted “up to”

<sup>6</sup> Deleted “the good is”

<sup>7</sup> Deleted “chapter”

<sup>8</sup> Deleted “they”

<sup>9</sup> Deleted “the Third”

<sup>10</sup> Deleted “so that is in the”

<sup>11</sup> Deleted “him”

<sup>12</sup> Deleted “that”

<sup>13</sup> Deleted “he does”

<sup>14</sup> Deleted “not”

<sup>15</sup> Deleted “but only, it’s not a”

<sup>16</sup> Deleted “we would”

<sup>17</sup> Deleted “I believe”

<sup>18</sup> Deleted “back to”

<sup>19</sup> Deleted “you have the”

<sup>20</sup> Deleted “is this”

<sup>21</sup> Deleted “and not only”

<sup>22</sup> Deleted “five, that, no at the beginning of chapter”

<sup>23</sup> Deleted “must have”

<sup>24</sup> Deleted “would”

<sup>25</sup> Deleted “what he makes”

<sup>26</sup> Deleted “together”

<sup>27</sup> Deleted “the”

<sup>28</sup> Deleted “which is”

<sup>29</sup> Deleted “this is”

<sup>30</sup> Deleted “where Socrates”

<sup>31</sup> Deleted “turned”

<sup>32</sup> Deleted “then”

<sup>33</sup> Deleted “so in other”

<sup>34</sup> Deleted “would be”

<sup>35</sup> Deleted “and therefore”